

TEACHING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: ACTIVE AND TRADITIONAL  
LEARNING APPROACHES IN A GROUP COMMUNICATION COURSE

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### **Abstract**

The vital role of effective groups within modern organizations requires attention to the dynamics of group communication, specifically conflict management. The first context in which most individuals learn group communication skills is in the university classroom. Sims (2006) asserts that the established literature examining approaches to teaching has convinced most scholars that the student's classroom experience must advance beyond the traditional lecture format, to more interactive student involvement. This study investigated the hypothesis that active learning would result in higher perceptions of self-efficacy in students' group conflict management than would traditional lecture instruction. This study also explores issues associated with differences in instructional methods, as well as change in self-efficacy across time periods.

University students in a group communication course who received either active learning or lecture based instruction in group conflict management voluntarily completed a conflict communication self-efficacy measure, and two conflict management measures. The analyses indicated that self-efficacy did increase significantly across time periods, however, no evidence was found of a difference between instructional methods. Measurement issues, the importance of a manipulation check, implications of the findings, and suggestions for future research are discussed.

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## Chapter 1

### Review of Related Literature

#### *1.1 Statement of the Problem*

Group work is everywhere in the American workplace, and conflict is a part of every group endeavor. The American Society for Training & Development, ASTD, identified 16 career skill sets, one of which incorporates group, teamwork, negotiation, and interpersonal skills (Overtoom, 2000). Employee abilities and skills in managing conflict are essential to effective work in such groups and teams, and contemporary workplaces require workers at all levels to problem solve and to communicate effectively with co-workers (Bailey, 1997; Packer, 1998).

One of the first environments in which future employees learn group conflict management skills is the university classroom. University educators must prepare individuals to solve problems, think critically, and address conflict in group environments and in doing so they need to take into account the effectiveness of various teaching methods: traditional lecture or knowledge-based learning, and active or skills-based learning. White and Frederiksen (2000) indicate that students achieve a high level of problem solving and critical thinking skills with active learning techniques. Sims (2006) asserts that the established literature examining approaches to teaching has convinced most scholars that the student's classroom experience must advance beyond the traditional lecture format.

My personal interest in active learning stems from reflection on my daughter's and son's educational experiences, as well as my own experiences within organizational



groups. Both of my children have difficulty concentrating, and learn best by being active and involved in the instruction. Over the years teachers who have employed traditional lecture based approaches have complained about their impulsiveness in asking questions, and their inability to remember facts for exams. I realized that, like me, my children learned in a different way and needed much more stimulation. My daughter and son have both had at least one opportunity to enjoy learning, as a result of a teacher who took the time to accommodate their learning styles, and understood that all children did not fit the same mold. These teachers found that my daughter and son learned quite well, enjoyed learning, and were very creative when given the chance through active learning methods.

Within my academic and professional life I have been a member of various groups and experienced a diverse range of communicative environments, ranging from informal meetings, to a task force charged with developing a strategic plan. A common thread within all these groups was the experience of conflict and the subsequent management of conflict among group members. In my experience, those individuals who applied effective group communication and leadership skills were very successful in their interactions. Unfortunately, many members had neither the skills nor the experience to be effective members, resulting in ineffectual group outcomes.

As a research assistant during my first year of graduate school, I examined topics such as conflict, group communication, and types of instruction. The knowledge I gained from these research projects, coupled with my experiences with my children's and my own learning processes, led me to further question the effectiveness of lecture versus active instructional methods, particularly with regard to university level instruction in group

communication. Given the need to prepare individuals to work effectively in groups, and the importance of conflict management skills in this work, this thesis explores lecture based versus active learning techniques in instruction in group conflict management.

## ***1.2 Group Work and Conflict***

Modern organizations rely heavily on group work from established committees to team meetings. Research has begun to document the vital role effective work groups play in complex organizations (Burtis & Turman, 2006). Effective and efficient teams can achieve synergistic results that may not be possible when individuals work independently. To achieve synergy teams must coordinate their interaction to integrate their knowledge and skills. The energy and expertise of several people working towards a common goal has been found to enhance the alternatives and options presented to an organization.

A team approach is dependent upon effective group communication. The unique dynamics of group communication call for a specific set of communicative skills that differs from those involved in one-on-one interaction. For the purposes of this study, “communication” is defined as “the process of interaction among people,” and thus group communication is described as a “co-construction of the communication among its members” (Burtis & Turman, 2006, p. 10). Effective groups serve three specific functions, task, relational, and individual (Burtis & Turman, 2006; Mudrack & Farrell, 1995). The task function is the common purpose or exigency for which the group exists, for example a project or goal. The relational function is represented by the interdependence among group members, which includes the maintenance of relationships

and the emotional aspects of interaction. The individual function involves the growth of and benefits to individuals obtained through group interaction. Burtis and Turman (2006) maintain that “a healthy, sustainable balance is attainable only when a group serves all three functions well” (p. 15). They argue that lack of awareness and attention to the functions a group serves may lead to considerable conflict interaction.

One challenge in the move to team approaches in organizations has been that although individuals may possess specific expertise in a field, they may fall short of essential team member skills, including the ability to manage conflict effectively. In this study conflict is examined within the communication framework introduced by Hocker and Wilmot (1985), who define “conflict” as “an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals” (p. 23). Conflict is an inevitable outcome of group work because each individual member of a group differs in his or her perceptions, meanings, and goals, as well as in communication skills. Conflict is created as these differences are expressed during interaction, leading to problems in and potential breakdown of the group. Conflict is neither good nor bad, but depending on how it is managed, it can lead either to constructive solutions, or to the breakdown of a group.

### ***1.3 Conflict***

If managed well, some level of conflict within groups or teams can result in value-added outcomes. If the members of a group legitimize different viewpoints, then communication can produce more alternative solutions and creative ideas. The synergy that occurs in a group produces innovation that would not be possible with one person.

Such synergy may lead to more willingness to cooperate, more productive conflicts, more members who are satisfied with the results, and therefore increased quality in decision making is achieved (Barker, Wahlers, & Watson, 2001).

If conflict is not managed well in a group, negative outcomes can result. Ineffective groups may find that problem solving has become laborious and inefficient, and that projects fail. The breakdown of a group may destroy the inter-personal relationships within an organization and because group membership influences the way in which individuals interact in other groups, may contribute to the negative perceptions of teams and groups in general. The ripple effect of ineffective group work has far-reaching impact on the overall success of an organization, and severe consequences for the individual team member. Effective conflict management in groups is therefore essential to achieving desired organizational outcomes and to avoiding undesirable ones.

Prior conflict management research has been focused principally on interpersonal conflict in intimate couples and dyads. Alper, Tojssvold and Law (2000) and Ayoko, Hartel, and Callan (2002) make evident that research conducted since 1995 has begun to focus on conflict within groups. They note that, in general, research has either explored conflict style and type, or conflict management processes. This group of researchers examined conflict management in work groups with a focus on distinctions between constructive and destructive group processes. In contrast, other scholars (DeDreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1997) have focused on how outcomes in groups are linked with conflict type, for example task or relational. Regardless of the type or function of

conflict, effectively managing conflict is critical, and hence the primary focus of this study is on conflict management processes.

Effective conflict management within a group relies on the application of varied set of communication skills including supportive language, openness, flexibility, listening, and the ability to provide positive feedback (Barker, Wahlers, & Watson, 2001).

Effective group skills differ from dyadic skills in that group members experience interdependence among group members which creates unique communicative interactions (Campion, Papper, & Medsker, 1996). Focusing on this interdependence, Desivilya and Eizen (2005) suggest that “work teams engage in tasks that are predominantly of a cooperative nature, with most conflicts emerging in the course of decision-making processes” (p. 185).

Desivilya and Eizen (2005) examined the link between self-efficacy, which is an individual's perception of competence, and conflict behavior. Their study focused on the role of self-efficacy among members within a group and how perceived self-efficacy related to conflict management, as well as to conflict management patterns. Their study employed self-report questionnaires in investigating intact teams handling real conflicts. A higher level of self-efficacy was associated with an individual's perception of his or her ability to successfully manage conflict (Desivilya & Eizen, 2005). Their research found that group members with higher levels of self-efficacy continued to negotiate during the conflict management process, while others with lower levels of self-efficacy gave up. The results indicate that individuals' levels of self-efficacy might be

enhanced through the development of conflict resolution skills, thus resulting in more effective management of conflict in groups.

#### ***1.4 Self-Efficacy***

Self-efficacy is one's cognitive appraisal of one's capabilities to perform, based on past performance (Choi, 2005), and has been defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1997, p. 2). Self-efficacy theory posits that belief in one's abilities is related to how a person performs or responds to tasks (Maier & Curtin, 2005). Maier and Curtin argue that "personal perception of performance capabilities is a strong predictor of behavior because efficacy beliefs influence the course of action people choose to pursue, the degree of effort made, [and] the extent of perseverance..." (p. 354). Perceptions of self-efficacy have been found to relate to increased performance, as well as academic achievement (Choi, 2005). This influence has been well supported in research (J. Lane, A. Lane, & Kyprianou, 2004; Pajares & Miller, 1994; Wood & Locke, 1987). Higher levels of self-efficacy do not lead to acquiring knowledge and to further application of skill. Rather, building on one's skills increases one's self-efficacy, which in turn is related to an increase in performance. The more one experiences success or the perception of increased capability, the higher their perception of self-efficacy becomes.

Numerous studies have found high predictive relationships between self-efficacy measurements and outcome variables (Bandura, 1982; Pajares, 1996). Bandura's (1982) experimental studies found that self-efficacy influences actions and behavior. In causal studies, a higher level of self-efficacy resulted in higher performance accomplishments.

In fact, the perception of self-efficacy was found to determine how much effort, as well as how much persistence people were willing to employ. As Bandura notes, “judgments of one’s capabilities partly determine choice of activities, rate of skill acquisition, and performance mastery,...then in turn boosts self-efficacy in a mutually enhancing process” (p.128). Pajares (1996) reviewed the self-efficacy literature and found that in studies examining writing and math, self-efficacy had a direct effect on performance. Interestingly, studies resulting in strong predictions of outcomes employed self-efficacy measures that were task and situation specific.

Self-efficacy beliefs have been found to influence several factors, such as; course of action, effort, education, and anxiety, as well as performance (Choi, 2005; J. Lane, A. Lane, & Kyprianou, 2005; Maier & Curtin, 2005). Maier and Curtin’s (2005) qualitative research exploring self-efficacy theory found that journalism and communication students reported higher levels of self-efficacy with improvement in their skills, as well as with out-performing other students in the class. The authors conducted a focus group in which they found that effectiveness was determined more by what appeared to be perception of ability rather than actual ability. Maier and Curtin (2005) also found that self-efficacy can be enhanced by activities that demonstrate how skills can be applied in situations outside the classroom. The findings of these studies demonstrate the positive contribution of self-efficacy theory to academic instruction. Choi (2005) examined the relationship between self-efficacy and academic performance of college students in general education courses. Specific self-efficacy was found to be a significant predictor of semester grades. In addition J. Lane, A. Lane, and Kyprianou (2005) investigated the

relationship between self-efficacy and academic performance among post-graduate students. These latter findings support prior research that has found a relationship between self-efficacy and performance, and that self-efficacy measures used in academic contexts have predictive effectiveness.

Contrary to the findings of most research, a few studies have found only a weak relationship between self-efficacy and performance outcomes. Finney and Schraw (2003), Shelton (1990), and Tipton and Worthington (1984) attribute these exceptions to the measurement of the self-efficacy construct. According to Finney & Shraw (2003), self-efficacy is task-specific, therefore items on a self-efficacy scale should be associated with specific task skills, rather than with general aspects of self-efficacy. The importance of this distinction between task-specific vs. general self-efficacy scales has been demonstrated in numerous studies utilizing the self-efficacy measure (Bandura, 1977; Desivilya & Eizen, 2005). Choi (2005, p. 198) makes clear that “measuring self-efficacy with respect to the specific task being assessed will result in higher predictive validity” and is “clearly the crucial factor.”

### ***1.5 Methods of Instruction***

With the move in organizations toward work teams and group problem solving, the imperative is to attract not only talented employees, but also ones who are able to understand group processes and conflict management. University level education is one environment in which potential employees can acquire such knowledge and skills. University instructors are the key to preparing students for future positions within organizations, and the instructional methods they employ may play a role in student



development of conflict management and group communication skills, and their levels of perceived self-efficacy in employing them. Recent research has made evident that instruction that involves active learning approaches may be more effective in skill development than instruction that involves the traditional lecture approach.

### ***1.5.1 Active Learning***

Active learning methods of instruction provide students with opportunities for interaction and skill application, building a particular skill through *doing*. Active learning “increases significant, relevant, and long-lasting learning in relatively short periods of time” (Waddill & Marquardt, 2003, p. 406). Active learning involves placing the student in a specific context in which they learn and apply skills. Students are provided with a brief explanation of effective skills, and then are tasked with utilizing this information to build those skills through action. A high level of active learning has been found to be effective in building critical thinking and problem solving skills in a diverse set of learning environments.

The results of a meta-analysis of over 100 experimental studies indicate that active learning methods increase academic achievement, produce positive student perceptions, and develop process skills (Shymansky et al., 1990; Smith, 1996). Another meta-analysis of active (problem-based) learning studies indicates that students learned essential problem solving skills with the ability to apply them (Sharp & Primrose, 2003). Interestingly, Prince and Felder (2006) found that assessments of learning that are given after a longer period of time following instruction have shown more positive effects of active learning methods. Prince and Felder assert that “students may acquire more

knowledge in the short term when instruction is conventional, but students taught with problem-based learning retain the knowledge they acquire for a longer period of time” (p.129).

Among scholars and educators who have used active learning approaches in the classroom, Marquardt (1996, 1999) has developed an approach with six components: (a) commitment to learning of the student; (b) a facilitator or instructor; (c) commitment to applying strategies; (d) a problem or challenge important to the group; (e) a diverse group of at least four members; and (f) a process emphasizing questions and reflection. The latter question and reflection component of the active learning approaches differs from other approaches in two ways. First, the focus is not on obtaining answers, but on asking questions that address what the student does and does not know. Second, the question and answer are not directed at a final outcome, rather to a process in which the student reflects and identifies solutions, and then takes action on those solutions. The reflection process then continues with inquiry into the actions taken. These components of the active learning method are reflected in the instruction employed by the instructors in the current study.

### ***1.5.2 Lecture***

Traditionally, instruction in elementary schools through universities has been presented in lecture form. Lecture instruction typically involves the instructor verbally presenting information, without student interaction, so that the student’s part in the activity is limited to listening, reading, and taking notes. Miller’s theory of pedagogy (Miller, 1988; Miller, Cassie & Drake, 1990) explains the learning involved in lecture

approaches as achieved through the one-way transmission of facts. Traditional lecture approaches therefore focus on the transmission of knowledge and are teacher-centered. Lectures provide an efficient way to communicate information on a variety of subjects, and are ideal for large classes of students.

Nadkarni (2003) compared three different types of instructional approaches; lecture, experiential, and hybrid (a combination of both), concluding that “students exposed to the hybrid method had more complex mental models” (p. 347). The study suggests that traditional lecture is not an effective approach when compared with experiential or hybrid methods. The effectiveness of lectures has also been found to vary depending upon the subject and/or the course content, and integrating different interactive activities into lectures has been found to be a valuable experience for students (Milner-Bolotin, Kotlicki, & Rieger, 2007). In this case study, the authors examined the results of interactive lecture experiments in introductory science courses. In their survey 78% of students considered interactive activities helpful. The findings also suggest that students improved in their ability to explain and problem-solve scientific concepts. For the purpose of this study, a traditional lecture approach with minimal interaction will be compared with an approach involving active learning methods.

### ***1.6 Hypotheses and Research Questions***

The research reviewed above suggests that when compared to lecture instruction, active learning instruction has results in increased performance, as well as higher grades among students. Studies in academic contexts have also indicated a positive relationship

between level of self-efficacy and level of performance. Therefore, this study posed the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Perceptions of self-efficacy in managing conflict within group interaction will be higher among students receiving active learning (skill-based) instruction than students receiving lecture (knowledge-based) instruction, immediately following the intervention. Hypothesis 2: Perceptions of self-efficacy in managing conflict within group interaction will be higher among students receiving active learning (skill-based) instruction than students receiving lecture (knowledge-based) instruction, at the end of the course.

Research also suggests that effective or productive managing of conflict will decrease the incidence or frequency of conflict within a group and produce better performance and outcomes. If, as in Hypotheses 1 & 2, active learning methods result in higher levels of skill in conflict management and higher self-efficacy, then one would expect to find a relationship between level of self-efficacy and both frequency of conflict and effectiveness in managing conflict. Accordingly, this study posed the following two research questions.

Research Question 1: Taking into account the difference in instructional methods, what is the relationship between perceived self-efficacy and frequency of conflict, following the group symposium?

Research Question 2: Taking into account the difference in instructional methods, what is the relationship between perceived self-efficacy and the perception of managing conflict, following the group symposium?

The self-efficacy studies that have been reviewed above suggest that students receiving instruction in which they experience opportunities to practice skills report higher levels of self-efficacy. This evidence also suggests that through experience students will continue to develop their perceptions of competence. Therefore in this study self-efficacy would be expected to increase after instruction, and following experiences working in a group that provide opportunities to practice conflict management skills. Accordingly, this study poses the following additional research questions:

Research Question 3: Taking into account the difference in instructional methods, how does self-efficacy change a) after students receive instruction? b) upon completion of the symposium?

Research Question 4: Taking into account the difference in instructional methods, how does the change in self-efficacy between post instruction and the final symposium relate to the frequency of conflict?

Research Question 5: Taking into account the difference in instructional methods, how does the change in self-efficacy between post instruction and the final symposium relate to the perception of managing conflict?

## Chapter 2

### Research Methods

#### *2.1 Research Design*

This research was a quasi-experimental study collecting data through confidential, self-report questionnaires. Students participating in the study were enrolled in an existing, required course in group communication and public speaking that includes a module on conflict management in groups. The conflict module is an integral part of the curriculum, in preparation for group project work that culminates in a symposium at the end of the semester (see Appendix I). Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) each instruct two sections of the course. The independent variable manipulation in this study involved the GTAs use of lecture based instruction for the conflict module for one of their sections, and an active learning instructional method for the other section. To control for effects of order, GTA experience with the material, and interactions between methods and GTA preferences for teaching style, the method used for each of the GTAs sections was randomly assigned. Students voluntarily completed questionnaires addressing three dependent variables: conflict communication self-efficacy, frequency of conflict, and perceived management of conflict within the student's assigned group. Questionnaires were completed prior to the conflict module, immediately after instruction, and at the end of the semester following the group symposium presentation. Additional measures of effectiveness included in the questionnaires pertained to research conducted by Dr. Christie Cooper and will not be addressed in this study.

## **2.2 Sample**

A convenience sample of 165 students from a population of 223 students enrolled in 12 different sections in the group communication course at a northwestern university volunteered to be participants of this study. This particular skills oriented, public presentation and small group communication course was chosen for this study because group interaction and group conflict management instruction are existing, integral components of the course, contributing to the validity of the research. Instruction in conflict management in groups is a 2-3 day module in the course. Over fifty percent of the course curriculum contains small group content, and includes in-class group activities, meetings, and instructional activities, as well as group work outside of class, and a final group symposium presentation. Prior to this study the instructional method used for the conflict management module was typically lecture based, with some variation given GTA teaching styles.

## **2.3 Procedures**

The university in which this study was conducted requires that all research involving human participants be reviewed by its Institutional Review Board (IRB). This Board ensures that all research conducted protects human participants, and is in accordance with ethical principles. An IRB Protocol application form describing the purpose of the study and the proposed procedures, including a participant consent form (Appendix D), was submitted prior to beginning the research. In addition, the graduate student researcher attended a workshop on research integrity, *Responsible Conduct in Research*, and completed a required on-line course.

For the purposes of this study, GTAs were given instruction on both lecture based and active learning instruction methods, together with content guidelines and handouts for the conflict management module. Dr. Christie Cooper developed new curriculum outlines for the conflict management module that detailed the process to be followed for each content area of the conflict module. Each outline presented two different instructional methods: active learning and lecture (see Appendix A). Prior to instruction on the content of the conflict module and the teaching methods, conducted as part of their weekly mentoring class, GTAs were introduced to the study and asked for their help in the research (see Appendix B). The study's procedures were discussed in detail, and Dr. Cooper provided three hours of instruction on the content of the conflict management module, as well as on the two instructional methods.

Teaching assistants used a script (see Appendix C) to introduce the study to the participants during the class hour immediately prior to the beginning of instruction on the conflict module. Following the introduction to the study, an informed consent was distributed for the students to read (see Appendix D). Those volunteering to participate were asked to sign the form and return one copy to the GTA. At this point, the Time 1 questionnaire (see Appendix E) was distributed to the participants, and reading material was given to those who chose not to participate. The informed consent form was not distributed along with the questionnaire to remove any assumption that participation was not voluntary, and to determine who wished to participate prior to distributing questionnaires. In addition, this step ensured that students' consent forms were not associated with their questionnaire, further maintaining confidentiality. A blind I.D.



number chosen by each student and known only to the student and course instructor was recorded by the student on the questionnaire to permit collating the questionnaires given at Times 1, 2, and 3. The questionnaire at Time 1 included only the conflict communication self-efficacy measure.

Immediately following instruction on the conflict module, GTAs used a script to introduce and administer the Time 2 questionnaire (see Appendix F). This questionnaire included the measure of conflict communication self-efficacy, as well as the frequency of conflict and conflict management measures. The final, Time 3 questionnaire (see Appendix F) was also introduced with a script, and administered during the day of the final exam. The final questionnaire included conflict communication self-efficacy, frequency of conflict, and the perceived management of conflict measures. All participants' questionnaires were collected immediately after completion and separated by section. All questionnaire data were then entered by section and blind ID number into SPSS software for analysis.

#### ***2.4 Instructional methods.***

The main focus of this study was examining the effects of two different instructional methods on self-efficacy in conflict management in groups. The goal of the conflict module of the group communication course is to enhance the students' ability to manage conflict, both proactively and collaboratively. Proactive management is the ability to manage group process in ways that reduce negative conflict. Collaborative management is the ability to manage conflict in groups once it arises, through group communication. The content of the conflict module includes general conflict information, conflict

management styles, supportive and defensive communication climates, feedback, positive (functional) and negative (dysfunctional) communication types, and communication tools (see Appendix A). For the purpose of this study “conflict” was defined as “an expressed struggle between two or more interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals” (Hocker & Wilmot, 1985, p. 23). The module distinguishes two types of conflict: the conflict of ideas and interpersonal conflict. Conflict of ideas is conflict that occurs from a difference in opinions, meanings, or perceptions, and occurs when individuals have different perceptions about content, purpose, or meanings related to specific group work. Interpersonal conflict is defined as conflict occurring among individuals based on personality, communication style, or interactional behaviors. The content of the conflict module was consistent across all sections to prevent interaction with the manipulation of instructional method.

Lecture based instruction classes received information orally, with the opportunity to ask questions and to engage in discussion with the instructor. These aspects of the instruction correspond with research that describes lecture as being limited to listening, reading, and student notes. GTAs were directed not to have students work in small groups, or practice skills through interactive exercises, thus making a clear distinction from the active learning method (see Appendix A). Students were provided outlines of the lecture, along with homework reading assignments. If lectures ran shorter than expected, GTAs were instructed to provide time for a free write assignment or a quiz on the information given in the lecture.

Active learning instruction classes received information through small group activities; games, dyadic role plays, and facilitated discussion about students' past experience and knowledge in group conflict situations (see Appendix A). These aspects of the instruction are consistent with research that describes active learning methods as providing students with opportunities for interaction and skill application. Students are placed in a context in which they learn and then apply skills. All six components of Marquardt's (1996, 1999) active learning approach were incorporated into this study's active learning method: instructor commitment to learning and to applying active learning strategies, a problem or challenge to the group, a diverse group of members, and an emphasis on reflective processes.

In the active learning sections, general conflict information was presented through reflective question and answer discussions in which the GTA requested specific examples. Conflict definitions were discussed in small groups or dyads, and conflict management style was presented using a conflict management style assessment, with continued learning within small groups using an instructional game. Upon completion of group work, the GTA facilitated a class discussion. Information on feedback in conflict situations was presented as a facilitated discussion of a bookmark handout. Following the discussion students were grouped into triads and practiced feedback, and the exercise was discussed in class. Finally, information on communication tools was presented prior to skill building activities in dyads. These activities included role scenarios in which each individual was able to practice active listening, reflecting, reframing, and perception

checking skills. The original conflict module included information on communication climate, but due to time constraints ~~this~~constraints this component was not presented.

## ***2.5 Dependent Measures***

The questionnaires incorporated three different scales. The first scale measured self-efficacy in dealing with conflict communication in small group interaction, the second scale measured perception of conflict frequency, and the third scale measured perception of conflict management within the participant's group. Demographic information was not collected in order to ensure confidentiality.

### ***2.5.1 Conflict communication self-efficacy.***

This instrument measured perception of conflict communication competence in groups. The instrument was a slight modification of Cooper's (2002) Communication Self-Efficacy measure, which was an adaptation from a scale developed by Monge, Backman, Dillard, and Eisenberg (1982) to address task specific self-efficacy. Monge, Backman, Dillard, and Eisenberg adapted their specific self-efficacy scale from a Generalized Self-Efficacy scale developed by Sherer et al. (1982). Cooper (2002) adapted the generalized self-efficacy measure in order to create a more specific measure for communication self-efficacy (see Appendix G), and reported a Cronbach's alpha reliability of .88. Previous research has supported the reliability and validity of a specific self-efficacy measures ~~of specific self-efficacy measures~~ (Desivilya & Eizen, 2005; J. Lane, A. Lane, & Kyprianou, 2004; Monge, Backman, Dillard, & Eisenberg; 1982). Rather than measuring a perception of general communication competence as in Cooper's scale, the modified scale used in this study narrowed the statements directly to

conflict communication in groups. For example, question 8 in Cooper's (2002) scale states "I feel confident during my conversations, I am sure of what to say and do." This question was revised in the current study to state "I feel confident during group conflict situations, I am sure of what to say and do." A 7-point Likert scale with a range from "completely disagree" to "completely agree" was used for responses to all 8 questions. The complete conflict communication self-efficacy measure is presented in Appendix E.

### ***2.5.2 Management of conflict.***

This instrument was created specifically for this study in order to measure student's perceptions of how well their group managed both inter-personal conflict and conflict of ideas (see Appendix F). No existing group conflict management measure was located. Research discussed in the literature review indicates that an increase in self-efficacy is associated with an increase in performance, in this case greater effectiveness in managing conflict in groups; hence a measure of conflict management was needed in order to explore this relationship in this study. Three basic questions were posed to assess participant's perceptions:

1. How well did your group manage inter-personal conflict?
2. How well did your group manage conflict of ideas?
3. How well did your group encourage discussion from all members?

The third question was included in order to increase the face validity of the measure as well as address the issue that conflict management that is done well includes all members. A 7-point Likert scale with a range from "excellent" to "poor" was used for responses to the three questions.

### ***2.5.3 Frequency of conflict.***

This instrument was created for this study in order to measure the frequency of conflict experienced within the student's assigned group, including both inter-personal conflict and conflict of ideas (see Appendix F). Increased frequency of conflict has been found to affect group outcomes, and is an indication that conflict is being poorly managed (Barker, Wahlers, & Watson, 2001; Burtis & Turman, 2006). Again, research noted in the literature review has indicated that an increase in self-efficacy is associated with an increase in performance, in this case a greater ability to manage conflict, so that higher self-efficacy should be associated with decreased frequency of conflict. A measure of frequency of conflict was needed in order to explore this relationship, and was composed of the following questions:

1. How often did you experience conflict of any type in your group?
2. How often did you experience conflict of ideas?
3. How often did you experience interpersonal conflict?

A 7-point Likert scale with a range from "very often" to "never" was used for responses to the three questions.

## Chapter 3

### Results

#### *3.1 Participant Response*

One hundred sixty-three questionnaires were completed at Time 1, 139 questionnaires were completed at Time 2, and 104 questionnaires were completed at Time 3. The aggregate response rate was 62%. Data for a given participant were entered for analysis only if the participant completed questionnaires at Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3. All other responses were omitted from the data set. The total number of participants included in the data set was 97, or 43% of the available population.

#### *3.2 Analyses of Dependent Measures*

Principal component factor analyses with varimax rotation were conducted on the Time 1 responses to all three dependent measurement scales in order to determine internal consistency. The scales for the measures of frequency of conflict and of conflict management each loaded on a single factor, indicating consistency. Accordingly, participant responses to the three scales in each measure were summed for use in further analyses.

The factor analysis of the measure for conflict communication self-efficacy resulted in two factors, as indicated in Table 1. Questions 1, 4, 5, 6, and 8 of this scale loaded most heavily on factor 1, accounting for 44.6% of the variance. Examination of these questions indicates that they are compatible, and refer to expressive aspects of self-efficacy, defined here as an individual's perceived competency in expressing their ideas, knowing what to do and say in a group conflict situation, and dealing effectively with

others. Questions 2, 3, and 7 of the scale loaded most heavily on factor 2, accounting for an additional 14.1% of the variance. Examination of these questions indicates that they are compatible and refer to receptive aspects of self-efficacy, defined here as an individual's perception that he or she is sensitive to others, listens carefully, and is receptive to group members. Two new variables, "expressed self-efficacy" and "receptive self-efficacy," were created by summing the respective scales, and employed in further analyses.

**Table 1**

**Principal Component Factor Analysis  
Conflict Communication Self-efficacy Measure**

Self-efficacy Time 1	Component 1	Component 2
Question 1	.689	-.085
Question 2	.336	.807
Question 3	.599	.291
Question 4	.611	-.367
Question 5	.724	.119
Question 6	.749	-.307
Question 7	.703	.273
Question 8	.819	-.258

Reliability analyses were conducted on all four of the measures indicated above, as in Table 2. All measures were found to have acceptable Cronbach alpha reliabilities, except for the measure of receptive self-efficacy. Given this low reliability, and the fact that this scale accounted for only 14% of the variance, no further analyses were conducted on this measure. Conflict communication self-efficacy was therefore operationalized in this study in terms of its expressive aspects.



**Table 2****Coefficient Alphas for Measures**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Coefficient Alpha</b>
<b>Conflict Frequency</b>	<b>.79</b>
<b>Conflict Management</b>	<b>.81</b>
<b>Expressive Self-efficacy</b>	<b>.80</b>
<b>Receptive Self-efficacy</b>	<b>.57</b>

**3.3 Hypotheses**

Hypothesis 1 predicted that perceived self-efficacy would be higher among students receiving active learning instruction than students receiving lecture instruction at Time 2, following the conflict module. A t-test for independent means was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference in perceived expressive self-efficacy between methods of instruction. No significant result was found,  $t = -1.48$ ,  $p = .139$ . For the lecture method,  $M = 25.1$  and  $SD = 4.45$ , while for the active learning method,  $M = 26.2$  and  $SD = 3.87$ .

Hypothesis 2 predicted that perceived self-efficacy would be higher among students receiving active learning instruction than students receiving lecture instruction at Time 3, following the group symposium. A t-test for independent means was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference in perceived expressive self-efficacy between methods of instruction at Time 3. No significant result was found,  $t = -1.35$ ,  $p = .179$ . For the lecture method,  $M = 26.1$  and  $SD = 4.94$ , while for the active learning method,  $M = 27.3$  and  $SD = 4.51$ .

### ***3.4 Research Questions***

Research question 1 involved a comparison between the students receiving lecture based and those receiving active learning instruction, with respect to the relationship between perceived self-efficacy and perceived frequency of conflict, following the group symposium at Time 3. The Pearson correlation coefficient for the expressive aspects of self-efficacy with perceived frequency of conflict at Time 3 for the lecture method was nonsignificant,  $r = .199$ ,  $p = .181$ . The correlation between self-efficacy and frequency of conflict at Time 3 for the active learning method was nonsignificant,  $r = -.122$ ,  $p = .367$ .


Research question 2 involved comparing the lecture based and active learning groups with regard to the relationship between perceived self-efficacy and perceived management of conflict, following the group symposium at Time 3. The Pearson correlation coefficient for self-efficacy with perceived management of conflict at Time 3 for the lecture method was statistically significant,  $r = -.613$ ,  $p < .01$ . The correlation between self-efficacy and management of conflict at Time 3 for the active learning method was nonsignificant,  $r = -.231$ ,  $p = .087$ .

Research question 3 involved a comparison across the two methods of instruction in the change in self-efficacy, not only between pre-instruction, Time 1, and post instruction, Time 2, but also between pre-instruction and the completion of the group symposium, Time 3. A repeated measure analysis of variance was conducted with method of instruction as the between-subjects factor, and the self-efficacy scores at Times 1, 2, and 3 as the dependent variable, repeated measure. The results indicated no statistically significant effect of the method of instruction on self-efficacy,  $F(1,95) = .811$ ,

$p=.370$ ,  $\eta^2=.008$ . However, the results for within-subjects effects indicated that for both methods there was a statistically significant increase in mean self-efficacy across the three time points  $F(2,95)=20.76$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $\eta^2=.179$ , power=1.0 (Levine's test indicated equality of variances across the three means). These means and standard deviations are presented in Table 3. Pairwise comparisons indicated statistically significant differences among all three means at  $p=.004$  or lower.

**Table 3**

**Self-efficacy Means and Standard Deviations**



	Lecture		Active Learning	
Time	M	SD	M	SD
Time 1	24.45	5.07	24.85	4.19
Time 2	25.29	4.82	26.09	4.12
Time 3	26.36	5.04	27.45	4.59

Research question 4 involved comparing the lecture based and active learning groups, with regard to the relationship between the change in self-efficacy between post instruction, Time 2, and the final symposium, Time 3, and the frequency of conflict. A new variable was created to represent the change in expressive self-efficacy. This variable was then correlated with the frequency of conflict at Time 3 for students receiving each method instruction. The Pearson correlation coefficient for change in self-efficacy and frequency of conflict at Time 3 for the lecture method was nonsignificant,  $r = .019$ ,  $p = .902$ . The relationship between change in expressed self-efficacy and frequency of conflict at Time 3 for the active learning method was likewise not significant,  $r = -.229$ ,  $p = .089$ .

Finally, research question 5 involved comparing the lecture based and active learning conditions, with respect to the relationship between the change in self-efficacy between post instruction, Time 2, and the final symposium, Time 3, and conflict management at Time 3. The Pearson correlation between change in self-efficacy and conflict management at Time 3 for the lecture group was not significant,  $r = -.034$ ,  $p = .832$ . Change in expressed self-efficacy was also correlated with conflict management at Time 3 for the active learning method and again no significance was found,  $r = .165$ ,  $p = .229$ .

—As an aid in interpreting the findings of this study, follow-up tests were conducted to examine if the method of instruction was a factor in changes in perceived frequency of conflict, as well as in perceived management of conflict between Time 2, post instruction, and Time 3, following the symposium. A repeated measures analysis of variance was conducted with method of instruction as the between-subjects factor, and either frequency of conflict or conflict management scores at Times 2 and 3 as the within-subjects dependent variable. The results for frequency of conflict indicated no statistically significant effect of method of instruction,  $F(1,99) = .314$ ,  $p = .715$ ,  $\eta^2 = .001$ . However, the results for within-subjects effects indicated that there was a statistically significant increase in mean perceived frequency of conflict between Time 2 and Time 3:  $F(1,99) = 8.467$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $\eta^2 = .079$ ,  $\text{power} = .822$ . The results for conflict management also showed no significant effect of method of instruction,  $F(1,97) = .134$ ,  $p = .715$ ,  $\eta^2 = .003$ , while the results for within-subject effects revealed a significant decrease in mean

perceived conflict management:  $F(1,97)=9.221$ ,  $p=.003$ ,  $\eta^2=.087$ , power=.852. The means and standard deviations for these variables are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4**

**Means and Standard Deviations for Frequency of Conflict and Conflict Management**

	Lecture		Active Learning	
	M	SD	M	SD
Frequency Time 2	13.77	3.42	13.35	3.95
Frequency Time 3	14.96	3.30	14.71	3.85
Conflict Time 2	8.41	3.02	7.72	3.79
Conflict Time 3	6.61	3.21	6.91	3.45

## **Chapter 4**

### **Discussion**

The overall purpose of this study was to investigate whether perceptions of self-efficacy in managing conflict within a group were higher among students who received active learning instruction than among students who received lecture based instruction. In addition, this study explored whether method of instruction was a factor in change in perceived self-efficacy across time periods: prior to instruction, following instruction, and after completion of the group symposium at the end of the course. Lastly, the study examined whether method of instruction was a factor in relationships between (a) perceived self-efficacy, and (b) change in self-efficacy from Time 2 to Time 3, and both frequency of conflict and perceived conflict management following the symposium.

#### ***4.1 Findings and Conclusions***

Based on the findings for Hypotheses 1 and 2, it is evident that there is not a difference between the instructional methods. Perceptions of group conflict management self-efficacy for lecture were the same as for active learning. Consequently, the lack of difference in this study does not support prior research that found active learning instruction resulted in higher levels of self-efficacy than lecture instruction. There are several possible reasons for the departure from expectations are the validity of and utility of the measure for self-efficacy, and lack of difference in the instructional methods as delivered to the students.

Although previous studies have indicated that self-efficacy is a valid, predictive measure, the time frame of this research project precluded a check on the validity of the

conflict-oriented modifications of Cooper's (2002) communication self-efficacy scale. The failure to find a difference between instructional methods may also be due to the insensitivity of the self-efficacy measure for finding such differences. A dependent measure involving observing and assessing actual conflict management skills such as, feedback, active listening, and reframing may have shown a difference between instructional methods, but developing such a measure was outside the scope of this study. In addition self-efficacy may not be sensitive to short term change, but utilized within a long term frame may have resulted in differences between methods.

In addition, GTAs for this study were first year instructors except for one, and participated in the instruction on the conflict module just prior to presenting it in class for the first time. Furthermore, with one exception, the GTAs presented the two different methods in classes that immediately followed one another. These circumstances may have resulted in more similarities between active learning and lecture methods than hoped. Video recordings of the conflict module instruction conducted by the GTAs would have served as a manipulation check and provided evidence useful in understanding the outcomes of this study. Due to time constraints it was not possible to implement these observations. In research discussed earlier, Prince and Felder (2006) also found that students may acquire more knowledge in the short term when instruction is conventional, although students taught with active learning approaches retain knowledge for a longer period. It is possible, then, that students receiving lecture based instruction gained just as much knowledge of conflict management methods as those receiving active learning instruction, so that differences in perceived self-efficacy in

managing group conflict might be apparent not in the short term, as in this study, but over a much longer span of time.

The first two research questions sought to determine if the method of instruction had any effect on the relationships between perceived self-efficacy and frequency of conflict, as well as between perceived self-efficacy and perceived management of conflict following the group symposium. With one exception, the lack of relationships between these dependent measures provided no basis either for further exploring the differences between the methods of instruction, or for examining whether or not a higher perception of self-efficacy is associated with perceptions of more or less conflict, or with higher perceptions of competence in conflict management.

Interestingly, the findings indicated that for the lecture method, a negative relationship exists between expressed self-efficacy and conflict management following the symposium. For this measure the scale values were reversed, meaning the lower the number, the better the student perceived their group managed conflict. Therefore a negative correlation indicates that better conflict management is associated with higher perceptions of expressed self-efficacy. This finding supports research that has shown increased perceptions of self-efficacy is associated with an increase in competence and performance. However, this correlation is significant only in the sections receiving lecture instruction. The lack of difference in instructional methods and absence of correlations for all other measures prevents a clear interpretation for this finding, and the results therefore could be considered an anomaly.



In answer to the third research question, evidence indicates that the different instructional methods did not make a difference in perceived self-efficacy either after receiving instruction or upon completion of the symposium. However, statistically significant increases in expressive self-efficacy were found for both methods of instruction, not only from pre-instruction to post instruction, but also from pre and post instruction to after the group symposium. In short, self-efficacy increased following instruction and during the period students were actively involved in their group symposium project, but the change cannot be attributed to the difference in methods. Thus the change in expressive self-efficacy indicates that something positive occurred, but a clear interpretation of what factors led to the change is not possible.

Like the first two questions, research questions 4 and 5 sought evidence that the method of instruction was a factor in the relationships between change in self-efficacy and frequency of conflict, as well as between change in self-efficacy and perception of conflict management from post instruction to the final symposium. The failure to find relationships between any of the measures prevents drawing conclusions about either the methods of instruction, or relationships among the dependent measures. Although both the frequency and management of conflict measures were found to be reliable, and appear to have face validity, the absence of a correlation might indicate that the conflict measures did not have construct validity in this context.

The follow up tests conducted to explore changes ~~that were run to explore changes~~ in between frequency of conflict and the ability to manage conflict between post instruction and the final symposium show significant changes in means. However, the

change in means does not differ for instructional methods, indicating that method was not a factor. s that perceptions of managing conflict and expressive self-efficacy significantly increased, however, cannot be attributed to a difference in instructional methods. The significant ~~increased~~decrease in frequency of conflict between post instruction and the final symposium may be attributed to the increased time students spent working within their groups, as well as involvement in an activity that was required for all students during this time frame. Specifically, students were required to prepare and present a symposium as a group, thus time together was more frequent than at the beginning of the course. The dramatic increase in time spent within an intact group engaged in real problem solving would explain the increase in frequency of conflict perceived by students. The decrease in means (due to reverse coding) for managing conflict indicates students perceived that their group managed conflict more effectively after the extended period of instruction, and in subsequent group interaction. Therefore, even though students perceived an increase in conflict, they also perceived that their groups became better at managing that conflict. The change in means supports research that argues effective conflict management reduces the amount of conflict experienced in a group. Thus these changes in expressive self-efficacy, frequency of conflict, and perceptions of managing conflict demonstrate clearly demonstrates positive outcomes in learning conflict management in groups, a positive learning outcome.

#### ***4.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research***

Like all studies, this study has limits. Participants were students enrolled in lower division communication ~~courses,~~courses; hence generalizations are limited to similar

populations. Results were also based on self-report questionnaires of students' perceptions. Observations of conflict management skills within group interaction might well indicate differences in what the students learned between these two different types of instruction.

Future research should examine the self-efficacy measure to determine if there is value in creating expressive and receptive self-efficacy scales. Perceptions of expressive and receptive self-efficacy may be different from one another. For example, students may perceive a high level of self-efficacy being receptive to others, but have lower levels of perceived self-efficacy when expressing themselves in a group. Studies could also explore if a difference exists between receptive and expressive self-efficacy within different contexts, such as work, public meetings, and family environments. Additional studies utilizing self-efficacy measures for instructional methods should continue, in combination with a wider set of measures for exploring possible differences in instructional methods.

Further study into the validity of the instruments used to measure perceptions of conflict management is also needed. Replication of this study with instructors that have greater experience in presenting lecture and active learning methods should also be undertaken to ensure clear differences between the manipulations. Finally, a longitudinal design that applies these instructional methods and then tracks student perceptions of self-efficacy and conflict management skills over a longer period of time may have interesting results.

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## **Appendix A**

### **GTA Conflict Module and Methods of Instruction**

#### **Research Assistant Training – Methods of Instruction**

##### **“Conflict in Groups”**

**Goal:** Enhance students’ ability to manage conflict both proactively and collaboratively.

*Proactive:* Manage group process in ways that reduce negative conflict.

*Collaborative:* Manage conflict in groups through communication.

**Content areas:**

General conflict information

Conflict management styles

Supportive and defensive communication climates

Feedback

Communication tools

**Methods of instruction:**

Traditional learning - lecture based (lecture, question & answer, some class discussion)

Active learning – activity based (small group work: role play, discussion, games; class discussion, Socratic instruction, mini lecture)

**Key:** Maintain the integrity of two distinct methods of instruction.

- Students in each of your two classes should address the same content.
- Students in each of your two classes should experience the content in completely different ways.

## **General Conflict Information**

**Label:** Conflict Management or Conflict Resolution

**Definition:** Conflict is “an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals.” (Wilmot & Hocker, 1998)

**Content:**

Conflict of ideas

Conflict of feelings (personal conflict)

**Types:**

Constructive - functional - positive

Destructive - dysfunctional – negative

### Overview of Two Methods Applied To The Content

**Detail:** Students in the *traditional lecture based* class should receive information by having the information delivered to them orally, receiving handouts, and hearing examples of language used in relation to the concepts being presented. The learning is individual. They can be asked to think of and share examples of concepts with the class, respond to questions from the instructor during lecture, and can take a pencil and paper measure. They should not work in small groups or practice the skills addressed. The learning is individual.

Students in the *activity based* class should be led to discover information, develop understanding, and learn/strengthen skills. The learning is primarily collaborative. Concepts are brought to the class process by questioning the students (query the corporate knowledge within the group & apply what they currently know generally or in other fields to the concept at hand), small group activity, dyadic role play, and facilitating discussion to address the information you need to address. This discussion can be as you process the questions you ask the students as a whole class or as you facilitate class discussion following group activity.

<u>Content</u>	<u>Active</u>	<u>Traditional</u>
General Conflict Information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CM vs. CR - questioning</li> <li>2. Definition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project it or write on board</li> <li>- Small groups or dyads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ break out components</li> <li>+ determine metaphors present</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Facilitate discussion of group work</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Content - questioning – ask for examples</li> <li>4. Types – questioning – ask for examples</li> </ol>	
Conflict Management Styles (Kilmann & Thomas)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CMS assessment</li> <li>2. Small groups exploring CMSs– (5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- each receives handout on 1 style</li> <li>- come to agreement on how the style operates, what it looks like – language</li> <li>- determine when it is useful &amp; not useful</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Class discussion</li> <li>4. Score the CMS and discuss</li> <li>5. Game – rock, paper, scissors</li> <li>6. Blake &amp; Mouton’s Conflict Grid discussion</li> </ol>	

Supportive and Defensive  
Communication Climates  
(Gibbs' model of 6 continua)

1. Mini lecture – Gibbs' model
  - provide & request clear examples
2. Activity
  - place class in dyads
  - think of a conversation that you observed

or

  - were a part of that didn't turn out well
  - pick one and script it
  - look for a comm. behavior that caused defensiveness
  - rewrite the script replacing that behavior with
    - one that is supportive
    - if there is time have volunteer pairs act out their role play
    - discuss as a class

Feedback  
(Keyton)

1. Bookmark handout
  - Facilitate discussion of concepts on bookmark
2. Activity
  - group class into triads
  - A provides feedback to B while C observes
  - Rotate within each group – do 3 times
  - Ask for volunteers & have 1 or 2 dyads role play for class
3. Class discussion

Communication Tools

1. Personalized and Other Directed Language
2. Listening skills
  - active listening
  - reflecting
  - reframing
  - attentive nonverbal behavior
  - perception checking
3. Skills building activities
  - dyad work
  - 1 partner in each dyad gets a role/scenario
  - partner practices communication skills during role play
  - give other partner a scenario and then role play so that other partner can practice skills

Could do the same with “I” statements and “you” statements

**Lecture issues:**

Most lectures have a homework reading assignment for the students (this will also serve to give you more grounding in the topic). You have an outline or script of the lecture and sometimes a handout or measure.

Due to the amount of time necessary to process collaborative work in the activity based class, you may find more information in the lecture. However, the key content is the same for both classes.

**What if the lecture runs shorter than expected?** *(This applies to all topic areas.)*

If your lecture runs short, you can have students individually do a free write for 5-7 minutes on their reaction to some element of the general topic that you choose, or answer a specific question you ask about the topic. Take these up to see what they are thinking.

OR

You can quiz them on the reading or the material in the lecture. (Typically, you would prepare a quiz or have some idea of what you could quiz ahead of time.)

## General Conflict Information

### Lecture

The ideas of conflict and communication have already been introduced today. Let's consider the ways that we talk about conflict. People use different labels to discuss how we process conflict.

(Ask the following questions rhetorically.)

What is the difference between **conflict resolution** and **conflict management** as labels?

What do you think someone means when they say they want to *resolve* conflict?

What do you think someone means when they say they want to *manage* conflict?

Think about groups or groupings of people who will interact over time – not just a single conflict episode and think about the difference in the words' definitions.

Resolution implies ending the struggle. This is often accomplished by any means necessary. However, management implies no end to the struggle and does not judge conflict to be good or bad.

Let's look at a **definition** of conflict.

(Project or write on the board the definition of conflict.)

Conflict is “an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals.” (Wilmot & Hocker, 1998)

(As a class have students *determine the key elements* of the definition.)

What does each element mean? Why is it important to the definition? What are the *assumptions about conflict* that are revealed by the language used in the definition [an underlying metaphor]? (Facilitate discussion based on student comments and the reading. This should be brief.)

Is conflict always a bad thing?

We can think of conflict as being **constructive or destructive**.

Constructive conflict can be thought of as positive or functional. It is characterized by cooperation and flexibility among the members and occurs when members value both the group task and each other. Some positive outcomes or functions of conflict include *increasing group productivity* by putting different ideas on the table in a group discussion, *providing an outlet for hostility*, and *increasing group cohesion*.

(productivity) Conflict surfaces more ideas. This may help the group make a better decision, develop a more complete solution to a problem, or turn in a stronger project. (hostility) When managed effectively conflict can surface and process negative feelings that might harm the group process if they go unaddressed. (cohesion) When group members do manage conflict well, it often brings members closer and provides a sense of security about the ability to handle any future conflict. How does the fear of conflict affect the kinds of choices members make about participating in their group? (Process student ideas and suggest that reducing this fear should then have positive effect.)

Destructive conflict can be thought of as negative or dysfunctional. It is characterized by domination, retaliation, competition, and inflexibility and occurs when members do not value each other or the shared goal but rather focus on self-centered goals. What are the negative outcomes of destructive conflict? How might it affect your symposium group? (Process student ideas.)

When we think of conflict as an expressed struggle where those involved are interdependent, yet unable to line up their goals, see competition over scarce resources, and see others as a hindrance to achieving our own goals, it is important to consider both the positive and negative outcomes possible and learn to effectively manage conflict in our lives.

(combined sources – Keyton and Wilson text)



## Conflict Management Styles Lecture

This will begin on the first day. You will likely not finish due to the time taken to introduce the research and have participants fill out the measures. After a brief presentation on general communication content move into the styles lecture.

1) The lecture material is in outline format and should be easy to present.

The styles are presented using two models. First, we look at the degree to which each style addresses a *concern for self* and a *concern for other*. Second, they are cast in terms of the possible combinations of *win and lose*.

Each style has general information, advantages, and disadvantages. Some have steps in the process and communication examples. Then there is a recap page that you could use as a handout or simply lecture from and a set of considerations when determining which style to use in a given situation.

**\*\*Key take away from this lecture is that *all styles have a use*. Spend time going through examples that you have given or that they have shared about when each style might be useful and when it would be problematic.**

2) There is a handout based on Blake and Mouton's Conflict Grid that looks at the way *concern for people* and *concern for production of results* work in tandem to lead to different approaches to managing conflict. Point out that just like in this class, many groups they will be a part of will be task groups – groups that require some output or result. Provide the handout, go over the information, and focus on the practical tips that help groups operate with high *concern for people* and high *concern for production of results*.

3) At the end of the first day (whenever that occurs in this lecture), provide the Styles and S/D Climate reading for homework.

4) Handout the “What Conflict Strategies Need Work?” instrument and have all class members fill it out. This is a part of the instruction. Then have them score their forms to see which style they use predominantly. (the scoring is provided on a separate page – it can be projected on an overhead or placed on the board) Ask if any were surprised by the result. Students usually really enjoy doing this and talking about it. Facilitate a class discussion and talk about the value of strengthening the weaker styles so that we have the option to employ the style that is most useful in any given situation. Talk about/discuss what it means to be useful. It is at least valuable for them to understand the various styles so that they can recognize others use of them when in a conflict.

(You may run through these elements in a different order. However, after filling out the research measures, you may not want to have them do the “styles” instrument next.)

(combined sources – Keyton and Wilson text)

## Supportive and Defensive Communication Climates

### Lecture

What do you think of when you hear the word climate? (student responses)  
 How is weather used as a metaphor when people talk about how they feel - or what it feels like to be in a certain situation? (student responses)

(Use responses as a lead in)

Similarly, the communication climate of a group is the atmosphere felt in the group. The members create this by the way they verbally and nonverbally communicate and by their effectiveness as listeners.

Jack R. Gibb (1961) created a model that helps us understand the way that communication behaviors can lead to climates in our groups that are supportive or defensive.

First, let's define defensive and supportive communication climates.

**Defensive:** This climate is based on negative or threatening group interaction. People become defensive, stop listening, and focus more on the "argument" than the actual arguments or points being made.

**Supportive:** This climate is a positive environment based on group interaction that encourages participation. The communication in the group suggests to members that they are "OK" even if there is disagreement with the points they have made.

(To give them a general sense of how the two climates differ and what they look like, talk from the S & D Climate Examples of Behaviors sheet – you can provide it as a handout before or after you talk about the content.)

Think of the climate of a group as falling somewhere on a **continuum** that spans from defensiveness to supportiveness. Gibb's model breaks out six pairs of opposites that anchor the ends of six continua. Let's look at what each of these means and what it might look like in a group.

(You can place the 6 continua on the board, project the model, or give them the handout – Table 8.1)

Evaluation takes place when group members judge or assess other members and use language that criticizes them often using "you" language. (examples)  
 Vs.

Description occurs when members respect others and their ideas even as they point out strengths and weaknesses that they see. (examples)

Control occurs when members behave in ways that attempt to manage what others think of themselves or the world around them. It is an indication that the communicator knows what is best and leads others to feel ignorant, uninformed, or immature. (examples)

Vs.

Problem orientation results from behaviors that indicate a desire to work together on a problem, to find solutions or answers that benefit all members and satisfy the group's objective. (examples)

Neutrality occurs when group members react in detached unemotional ways. Others are treated as "things" only capable of functions rather than capable of choices and emotions. (examples – impersonal communication – when people talk to a waitperson, the grocery checker, or a flight attendant with a focus on their role rather than the person)

Vs.

Empathy occurs when members show respect by identifying with other members' thinking or feeling. You can be empathetic toward another member's ideas, behavior, production, or situation. (examples)

Superiority is supported by behaviors that indicate "I am better than you." These behaviors often inhibit others and limit the level of participation in the group. (examples)

Vs.

Equality is supported by behaviors that minimize differences in status, ability, and power in the group. (examples)

Certainty behaviors indicate rigid commitment to a point of view. It often comes from a member you might label as a know-it-all. The rigid stance taken by some members makes the statement that everyone else is wrong if they don't agree. (examples)

Vs.

Provisionalism is characterized by flexibility and comes from a focus on solving the problem collaboratively. Statements are made tentatively and opinions are requested from others. (examples)

Strategy is often the result of a hidden agenda. Members preplan a goal and manipulate other members in order to achieve that goal. There is an attempt to make the other members believe that something was their idea or that they have made the decision when in reality they were manipulated to come to that conclusion. (examples)

Vs.

Spontaneity occurs when group members act openly and honestly. They are straightforward in discussion, listening to fellow group members, and responding candidly. (examples)

Discussion questions: (Facilitate as much discussion as you think is helpful.)

Which of these climates would you rather have in your class groups?

Is one of these climates always better than the other?

Remember to think of the group climate as falling somewhere on a continuum between the supportive and defensive ends. Point to a location on that continuum and ask - Can you think of situations where this would be the better climate? OR Prepare a list of group goal or group types and have students come up to the board and point to the location on the continuum that would make the most sense and explain why.

(This text is taken primarily from Keyton and Wilson texts indicated on your paperwork. There are excellent communication examples to be found in the Keyton handout provided. They will read this at some point, so you want to create other examples yourself or have the students think of examples during the lecture.)

## **Feedback**

### **Lecture**

Slide 1: **Blank**

Slide 2: **Title**

Feedback truly is the process of champions when we're involved in groups. If we define a champion as someone who succeeds in a certain activity, we'll see today how effectively giving and receiving feedback can lead to success for group work.

Slide 3: **Image – 3 runners approaching a “finish line”**

What do you think is happening in this picture? (student ideas)  
It does look like a race.  
Who is trying to win? Who is the competition between? (student ideas)  
Our culture does often focus on competition between individuals.

Let me tell you what is really happening in this picture. Toby, John, and Sara are all members of a team. A team only succeeds if all its members cross the line at the same time. So along the way each team member supports the other two. Sara could have pointed out a pothole to Toby. John might have encouraged Sara to keep going when she was getting tired. Sara could have provided feedback to John and Toby when their pace was too fast. She knew they needed to slow down in order to save energy for the end of the run.

Slide 4: **Image – 4 people holding puzzle pieces**

Each member of the group has an important piece of the puzzle.

Group members have had different experiences, learned different skills, know different pieces of information, and view issues in different ways. These differences can all work together to help solve a problem or accomplish a task.

Slide 5: **Image – 1 person running with puzzle piece toward its place, others looking on**

Feedback helps direct members contributions...

Slide 6: **Image – 4 people in a huddle**

...and impact group output.

Slide 7: **Value of Feedback (image of man shouting)**

How many of you would like to receive feedback from this man?  
He doesn't look very happy about something someone has done.  
When someone gives you feedback by yelling what do you do? (student ideas)

How does it affect your ability to "hear" what is being said? (student ideas)

Three issues related to the value of feedback in groups are:

- that it is dependant upon effective technique,
  - when done well it can enhance relationships among members,
  - and it can improve a group's ability to accomplish its task
- (transition) Let's take a minute to look at the group context.

Slide 8: **Group Context**

For quite some time in the study of group process, researchers saw two key dimensions: relational and task. We can think of groups in terms of what is happening between the group members interpersonally and we can think of groups in terms of how they are working toward accomplishing their task.

Scholars who look at groups have labeled another key dimension of group process. When people are engaged in groups, they are learning.  
What do you think group members might learn by being in a group? (student ideas)

(incorporate ideas) Members can learn about the topic their group is addressing, they can learn about themselves – how they interact with others and what they can contribute, and they can learn people skills – how to work well with others.

That ability to interact well with others includes being able to give and receive feedback. Effective feedback fuels group process. Without it you may find yourself in a group like this one (bottom right), stuck in a quagmire or drowning in quicksand.

Slide 9: **Goals and Obstacles**

My goal for today is to address skills for effectively giving, receiving and managing message feedback in groups.

People often have opinions about other's behavior. Sometimes they would like to say something about it but don't. What do you think prevents people from giving feedback? (student ideas) (incorporate ideas)

Three possibilities are:

- a fear that the conversation will lead to conflict
- not feeling comfortable evaluating others' behavior
- not having the skill to accurately assess the group's process

(transition) Let's look at why it is important to overcome these obstacles.

Slide 10: **Message Feedback**

One set of researchers found that nearly 75% of all group problems are linked to interpersonal problems and poor communication.

That's quite a bit. If we could learn to give and receive feedback effectively, it might reduce the amount of problems we face in our groups.

Communication is certainly the tool we use to deliver feedback to others. In addition, since we know that poor communication is one of the primary causes of problems in groups, it follows that communication is an important subject for feedback. We need to learn how to effectively talk about the communication that is occurring in our groups.

(transition) Let's look at several definitions of feedback.

Slide 11: **Definitions**

Wilson suggests we think of feedback as "messages sent from a receiver to a source that have the effect of correcting or controlling error." What does that mean? (student ideas) Do you recognize one of the communication models we talked about in this definition? (conduit model with a feedback loop)

According to Nadler, we can also think of feedback as "information about group members' actual performance or the actions of a group."



Slide 12: **Feedback in Groups (final definition)**

Keyton clarifies three topics of feedback in her definition.

“Feedback is information group members give to other members about their performance, behavior, or communication displayed in the group setting.”

Slide 13: **Feedback Valence**

Feedback has valence, meaning it can be positive - about something you think is useful and would like to continue or negative – about something you think is harmful to the group process and you would like to see changed or stopped.

Slide 14: **Feedback Types**

There are three types of feedback.

- Descriptive feedback identifies or describes a behavior.
- Evaluative feedback provides an assessment of a behavior.
- Prescriptive feedback provides advice about what a group member should continue, change, or stop.

Remember from the Keyton definition, topics of feedback are performance, behavior, or communication. When I say describe, evaluate, or prescribe a behavior, I mean all types of behavior – behavior that indicates level of performance, physical behavior, and communicative behavior.

It often works well to provide feedback in the listed order. If you start by telling someone what you think they should do, how often do they listen to you? Typically, that stops the conversation right there. It is good to start by describing a behavior and then wait to see what they might say. If there is still an issue, then you might explain the way that you feel the behavior is affecting the group – then wait to see what they might say. Then finally, if you aren’t coming to some shared understanding of what is occurring in the group due to that behavior, you may need to suggest a different behavior for the sake of the group (members feeling, task accomplishment, etc.)

(Provide an example [someone being late consistently, always joking around during the meeting, being controlling in the meeting] and run it

through all three types. Then ask for examples from the class and work through how the feedback would change as you go through the three types.)

(transition) There are several things to consider if we want to give feedback effectively.

## Slide 15: **Giving Feedback**

First, feedback should be direct. If you have a concern with another member's behavior and you choose to tell a third party, believing that they might pass on the information, several things could happen that resemble a message sent in a bottle.

(1) They never get the message. (2) They get an altered message. Remember the phone game – you start a message at one end of a line of people and by the time it reaches the other end of the line, the message has changed. (3) At the time the information is shared, there is no opportunity for a two-way conversation between you and the other party. Confusion and misunderstanding may occur.

Next, feedback should be timely. If we have a concern that would require negative feedback and we hold onto that concern, pressure tends to build up. Just like a smoke stack, when we feel a certain amount of pressure, we blow up. This can lead to extremely ineffective feedback.

You may not always choose to deliver feedback immediately. If you are hurt or angry, you may need to cool down and think about the best way to share your concerns. But you don't want to let pressure build.

## Slide 16: **Giving Feedback Continued**

When we talked about the three types of feedback, we learned that feedback is really a two-way communication event. Feedback is not people's opportunity to tell others what they think without listening.

The way we share our thoughts with others has a great deal to do with the effectiveness of the feedback. We may need to adapt our communication style to the situation. If you normally speak directly and you want to provide feedback to a group member who is sensitive or shy, you might change your style to be less direct and more supportive of that member's feelings as you share the information.

(You can provide multiple examples and/or ask for examples from students.)

## Slide 17: **Giving Feedback Continued**

To keep feedback from feeling like a boxing match, it is important to consider what you will do. There are several choices to make in the planning process. (1) What is the individual's communication style? Should mine be adapted? Similar to the examples we just talked about, a mismatch of communication styles can lead to misunderstanding, hurt feelings, or worse behavior than you originally wanted to address. (you want them to consider all receiver characteristics that might be relevant – comm. style, personality, etc. - insert whatever makes sense here based on your discussion of examples.) (2) Should the feedback be done one-on-one or in the group? What kinds of issues would cause you to choose one way or the other? (student ideas) (3) What is the best communication channel for the feedback? Although we often think of groups as having the face-to-face option, some groups are virtual groups - they only meet via technology (audio or video conferencing, on-line group processing software, etc.). Is fax, phone, e-mail, memo, or face-to-face the best option? (4) Where is the best place and what is the best time to bring up the feedback? Should we talk after group meeting, before the next meeting, over a break, over coffee in a neutral location? How can you see time and location making a difference in the way the other party hears the initial feedback? (student ideas) These four considerations are just one set of ideas. Depending upon the situation, there are other factors you may want to consider. (You may want to provide examples for some of these ideas.)

Feedback needs to be professional. Remember the three dimensions of group we discussed? The goal of feedback should be to enhance the groups' task accomplishment, the members' relationships, and/or the members' learning. This motivation paired with the skills we have discussed will lead to professional feedback.

If these ideas are not considered and applied your feedback may end up in file 13. That won't do the group any good.

## Slide 18: **Receiving Feedback**

Receiving feedback parallels the process of giving feedback. You want to listen for the behavior to be continued, changed, or stopped (What is being described?), consider the impact of this behavior on group process (How is it being assessed?), and ask for suggestions on more effective behaviors (What prescription is being advised?).

You may find that the person sharing feedback with you has less understanding of the process than you. If so, you can ask them questions that get you to fuller understanding of their concern or praise. (You could run through a scenario here to show them how they can be active listeners.)

Slide 19: **Feedback: An Important Part of Group Participation**

When group members effectively give and receive feedback, it positively affects the relationships among members, it positively affects task outcomes, and it positively affects member learning.

Slide 20: **Feedback Helps Groups Succeed (image of 2 people helping 1 person over a wall – a group in action)**

The bottom line is that feedback helps groups succeed.

(You might not think/talk in terms of bottom lines. Feel free to adapt the script to your personal style. Just keep the content.

**Key:** This seems to be weighted toward negative feedback. That is true as the content attempts to address the fears/problems related to giving and receiving negative feedback. However, all of the principles apply to positive feedback as well. Although members don't tend to fear this, they may be ill equipped to evaluate group process in ways that make behaviors clear that need positive feedback.

Be sure to pepper your examples with positive feedback as well. We want students to recognize that there is feedback that makes you feel good to give it and others good to receive it. Also, that this is an important part of group process as it encourages people to continue behaviors that are having a positive effect on process.

In general, examples are a vital part of the lecture as they help students hear what effective and poor feedback sound like so that they can differentiate and initially imitate as they begin to deliver feedback with the goal of improving their groups.)

(source – Keyton)

## Communication Tools

### Lecture

#### Personalized versus Other Directed Statements

Explain the key difference: Personalized language takes responsibility in the situation, which reduces defensiveness; while other directed language places blame and increases defensiveness.

Distribute the handout on Personalized and Other-Directed Sentences. Then have students read through the statements. Pick out a few paired statements and talk about how group members might feel being the recipient of these statements. Differentiate the affect they would likely have.

One specific form of personalized language is the three part “I” statement.

Distribute the handout on “I” messages. Have them read through the first page (brief overview). Ask the students for examples of “you” statements they may have heard or used themselves. Then explain the three part model for an “I” statement on the second page and work through an example. As a class exercise, take a few of the examples they provided and have them work through the formula to turn them into “I” statements.

#### Open communication

Lecture from the Rules for Open Communication outline (5 rule model)  
(The first sub point under the rule #1 is to use “I” statements, so it is an easy transition.)

#### Listening Skills

Listening is a skill set. There are multiple listening techniques that enhance any communication event. When conflict is present, it becomes even more important to listen effectively.

In general, you want to be attentive - to focus on the speaker as you listen.

Five skills are:

- active listening: listening that displays an intent to understand the intended message

This is a general approach to listening that includes many of the other techniques we will talk about today. Often group members don’t listen attentively to one

another. They may be distracted, thinking about other things, or thinking about what they are going to say next, (the latter is particularly true in conflict situations or disagreements). Active listening is a structured way of listening and responding that focuses attention on the speaker.

- attentive nonverbal behavior: attentive posture (turn toward the individual, lean forward, etc.), respectful eye communication, nodding head, saying “um” or “uh-huh,” using facial expressions that show interest or caring

- perception checking: asking whether we see the situation with the same understanding as others

Restate or paraphrase what was said and ask if that is what was meant.

- reflecting: acknowledging the emotion in a statement or situation

This is accomplished by listening to the feelings (stated or implied) of other group members and echoing the emotions – stating the perception you have. It is important to verbally or nonverbally ask the member to confirm, deny, or clarify the perception. You don’t want to escalate the emotion in a conflict, but acknowledging other members’ feelings can validate them as people and place the emotion on the table so that it can be addressed while managing the conflict.

- reframing: reconceptualizing a situation to achieve shared understanding

This is accomplished by restating what another member said with a slightly different perspective. You can accomplish the following by reframing effectively.

*increase clarity* by putting another member’s comment into easy-to-understand language

*reduce the level of emotion* in the group by reframing with language that has less emotional content

*address bias* (whether it was intended or not) by reframing with language that will not be offensive to others

*point out commonalities among members* by reframing one member’s statement/question in terms of another member’s comments

*bring out/clarify interests rather than positions* by reframing a comment as the underlying need/desire you perceive the person has indicated rather than the position that was stated *or* you can check your understanding of a comment with a question. To do this phrase your question so that you reframe the content of the comment to represent an interest rather than a position.

Summarize the communication tools available to them as group members.

(Be sure to provide examples throughout.)

(combined sources – TA 131 prep manual, Domenici & Littlejohn – Mediation text)

## General Conflict Information Activity Based

1. CM vs. CR - questioning
2. Definition
  - Project it or write on board
  - Small groups or dyads
    - + break out components
    - + determine metaphors present
  - Facilitate discussion of group work
3. Content - questioning – ask for examples
4. Types – questioning – ask for examples

(No Handouts)

1.) The ideas of conflict and communication have already been introduced today. Let's consider the ways that we talk about conflict. People use different labels to discuss how we process conflict.

What is the difference between conflict resolution and conflict management as labels? (Write them on the board. If you're not getting much, ask follow-up questions and write responses on the board under each label.) What do you think someone means when they say they want to resolve conflict?

What do you think someone means when they say they want to manage conflict? Think about groups or groupings of people who will interact over time – not just a single conflict episode.

(You could use the words resolve and manage in a context other than conflict to get them to simply think about the difference in the words' definitions.)

(Process the differences and clarify that resolution implies ending the struggle often by any means necessary and that management implies no end to the struggle and does not judge conflict to be good or bad.)

2.) (Project or write on the board the definition of conflict.)

Conflict is “an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals.” (Wilmot & Hocker, 1998)



(Break class into small groups or dyads and have students *determine the key elements* of the definition and talk about what each means. Why is it important to the definition? Have them think about any *assumptions about conflict* that are revealed by the language used in the definition [an underlying metaphor]. Facilitate discussion based on what each group shares and the reading. This should be brief.)

3.) What types of conflict have you observed?

(Whatever they say, characterize it.

Example: I have conflict with my Mom all the time or boyfriend/girlfriend problems or my project group in my economics class– *Characterization:* So we have conflict with different people.

Example: There's always conflict when my friends play basketball or at work when we have to meet a deadline people always get rude and start ordering each other around – *Characterization:* So there are different contexts or situations where conflict occurs frequently.)

In these different situations and with different people is the conflict always a bad thing? (They may say yes. Either way move forward with more questions.)

Does conflict always involve emotional outbursts?

What do people have conflict about?

(Get to the place where you can interject that conflict can be about/over differences of ideas or feelings. Go back to the elements of the definition. Then move to the possibility of conflict having positive outcomes.)

4.) Conflict can be constructive or destructive.

Constructive conflict can be thought of as positive or functional. It is characterized by cooperation and flexibility among the members and occurs when members value both the group task and each other. Some positive outcomes or functions of conflict include *increasing group productivity* by putting different ideas on the table in a group discussion, *providing an outlet for hostility*, and *increasing group cohesion*.

(productivity) Conflict surfaces more ideas. This may help the group make a better decision, develop a more complete solution to a problem, or turn in a stronger project.

(hostility) When managed effectively conflict can surface and process negative feelings that might harm the group process if they go unaddressed. (cohesion) When group members do manage conflict well, it often brings members closer and provides a sense of security about the ability to handle any future conflict. How does the fear of conflict affect the kinds of choices members make about participating in their group? (Process student ideas and suggest that reducing this fear should then have positive effect.)

Destructive conflict can be thought of as negative or dysfunctional. It is characterized by domination, retaliation, competition, and inflexibility and occurs when members do not value each other or the shared goal but rather focus on self-centered goals. What are the

negative outcomes of destructive conflict? How might it affect your symposium group? (Process student ideas.)

When we think of conflict as an expressed struggle where those involved are interdependent, yet unable to line up their goals, see competition over scarce resources, and see others as a hindrance to achieving our own goals, it is important to consider both the positive and negative outcomes possible and learn to effectively manage conflict in our lives.

## Conflict Management Styles Activity Based (Kilmann & Thomas)

1. CMS assessment
2. Small groups exploring CMSs– (5)
  - each receives handout on 1 style
  - come to agreement on how the style operates, what it looks like – language
  - determine when it is useful & not useful
3. Class discussion
4. Score the CMS and discuss
5. Game – rock, paper, scissors
6. Blake & Mouton's Conflict Grid discussion

(Handouts: CMS Assessment & scoring rubric; Five Basic Approaches grid-Fig. 11.1; Rock, Paper, Scissors Exercise; Blake and Mouton's Conflict Grid-Fig. 7.2; Rothwell Chapter 10 reading assignment; Group Communication Climate reading assignment-Keyton)

(Today's Reading: Rothwell Chapter 10 reading assignment)

Hopefully this will begin on the first day. You may not finish due to the time taken to introduce the research and have participants fill out the measures. After the general communication “mini lecture” begin addressing the styles information.

- 1.) Have all students take the CMS assessment - “What Conflict Strategies Need Work?” Don't score it yet.
- 2.) Then break the class into small groups and give each group the paragraph or two of information on one of the styles. Ask them to come to agreement on how the style operates, what it looks like, what language people use when operating with that style. Finally, have the groups determine when their style is useful and when it is not useful, perhaps even harmful. Ask them to think of examples.
- 3.) Have each group report and facilitate discussion about each style as they share. Make sure there is full class discussion of the degree to which each style exhibits a *concern for self* and a *concern for other* and/or sets up a win/win, win/lose etc. situation. (Handout the Five Basic Approaches Grid based on concern for self and other when appropriate in the discussion. You could draw it on the board and save the handout for later, when you give them their homework reading.) Ask about advantages and disadvantages of each style and then pepper in the content from the lecture. Discuss the usefulness of each style. Ask for examples.

4.) Project or hand out the scoring rubric for the “What Conflict Strategies Need Work?” instrument and have all class members fill it out. (the scoring is provided on a separate page – it can be projected on an overhead or placed on the board) Ask if any were surprised by the result. Students usually really enjoy doing this and talking about it. Facilitate a class discussion or talk about the value of strengthening the weaker styles so that we have the option to employ the style that is most useful in any given situation. Talk about/discuss what it means to be useful. It is at least valuable for them to understand the various styles so that they can recognize others use of them when in a conflict.

5.) Facilitate the Rock, Paper, Scissors Exercise. Place them in pairs, explain what to do, and after they role play go through the provided discussion questions.

6.) Handout the Blake and Mouton’s Conflict Grid and talk about the way *concern for people* and *concern for production of results* work in tandem to lead to different approaches to managing conflict. Point out that just like in this class, many groups they will be a part of will be task groups – groups that require some output or result. Focus on the practical tips that help groups operate with high *concern for people* and high *concern for production of results*.

\*At some point provide the Styles and S/D Climate Behaviors readings for homework.

(You may run through these elements in a different order. However, after filling out the research measures, you may not want to have them do the “styles” instrument next.)

## Supportive and Defensive Communication Climates

### Activity Based

(Gibbs' model of 6 continua)

1. Mini lecture – Gibbs' model
  - provide & request clear examples
2. Activity
  - place class in dyads
  - think of a conversation that you observed or were a part of that didn't turn out well
  - pick one and script it
  - look for a comm. behavior that caused defensiveness
  - rewrite the script replacing that behavior with one that is supportive
  - if there is time have volunteer pairs act out their role play
  - discuss as a class

(Handouts: Gibb's Model – Table 8.1; S & D Climate Examples of Behaviors – McCorkle & Reese; Feedback reading assignment– Chapter 13 – Keyton)  
 (Today's Reading: Group Communication Climate reading - Keyton)

1.) Sometimes people make a weather reference to describe what a certain situation feels like. How would you describe a relationship you've observed in terms of the weather? (examples. "I hear its stormy over at Pete and Jennifer's place" "My group is like being in a drought. No one has any ideas, so we just sit and stare at one another. It's like standing in dry heat. It's really draining when there is no progress.")

Group members create a communication climate by the way they verbally and nonverbally communicate and by their effectiveness as listeners. The way it feels to be in a group is not only *influenced* by the communication in the group, it also *influences* the communication in the group.

Think of the climate of a group as falling somewhere on a continuum that spans from defensiveness to supportiveness. (Project the Gibb's model or draw the continua on the board.) Gibb's model breaks out six pairs of opposites that anchor the ends of six continua. Let's look at what each of these means and what it might look like in a group.

Evaluation takes place when group members judge or assess other members and use language that criticizes them often using "you" language. (1 clarifying example)  
 Vs.

Description occurs when members respect others and their ideas even as they point out strengths and weaknesses that they see. (1 clarifying example)

Control occurs when members behave in ways that attempt to manage what others think of themselves or the world around them. It is an indication that the communicator knows what is best and leads others to feel ignorant, uninformed, or immature. (1 clarifying example)

Vs.

Problem orientation results from behaviors that indicate a desire to work together on a problem, to find solutions or answers that benefit all members and satisfy the group's objective. (1 clarifying example)

Neutrality occurs when group members react in detached unemotional ways. Others are treated as "things" only capable of functions rather than capable of choices and emotions. (1 clarifying example – impersonal communication – the way some people talk to a waitperson, the grocery checker, a flight attendant)

Vs.

Empathy occurs when members show respect by identifying with other members' thinking or feeling. You can be empathetic toward another member's ideas, behavior, production, or situation. (1 clarifying example)

Superiority is supported by behaviors that indicate "I am better than you." These behaviors often inhibit others and limit the level of participation in the group. (1 clarifying example)

Vs.

Equality is supported by behaviors that minimize differences in status, ability, and power in the group. (1 clarifying example)

Certainty behaviors indicate rigid commitment to a point of view. It often comes from a member you might label as a know-it-all. The rigid stance taken by some members makes the statement that everyone else is wrong if they don't agree. (1 clarifying example)

Vs.

Provisionalism is characterized by flexibility and comes from a focus on solving the problem collaboratively. Statements are made tentatively and opinions are requested from others. (1 clarifying example)

Strategy is often the result of a hidden agenda. Members preplan a goal and manipulate other members in order to achieve that goal. There is an attempt to make the other members believe that something was their idea or that they have made the decision when in reality they were manipulated to come to that conclusion. (1 clarifying example)

Vs.

Spontaneity occurs when group members act openly and honestly. They are straightforward in discussion, listening to fellow group members and responding candidly. (1 clarifying example)

Are these clear? Do you have a general understanding of each behavior? (Clarify.)

2.) Activity (Handout the Gibb's Model – Table 8.1 in step “d”)

- a. Place students into dyads.
- b. Have each student think of a conversation (interpersonal) that did not go well (turned unexpectedly negative).
- c. Have the paired students share their negative conversation stories and then pick one to work with.
- d. Have them write the dialogue and then analyze it for communication that led to defensiveness.

*Hand out the model.*

- e. Ask them to locate that communication behavior on one of Gibb's six climate continua.
- f. Finally, have them look at the supporting behavior that is the polar opposite and rewrite the dialogue with that behavior and the changes it might create in the rest of the interaction.
- g. If you think your students would participate, ask for several dyads to volunteer to role play their dialogue in front of the class. Have them do the negative script and then let the class members guess which negative communication behavior is being portrayed (there may be more than one). Then have the pair role play the reworked script. Let several pairs do this if there is time.
- h. Then facilitate class discussion based on what was done in the dyads. Dig for examples from their conversations that address many of the behaviors that lead to defensiveness. Try to get them to see how changing a behavior at one point in the conversation can completely alter the outcome of the interaction. Improving out interaction with others can be that “simple.” Look for ways to talk about how supportive communication behaviors can both prevent conflict and enhance the management process when conflict is already present.

End by summarizing the two climates:

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Defensive:  | This climate is based on negative or threatening group interaction. People become defensive, stop listening, and focus more on the “argument” than the actual arguments or points being made.  |
| Supportive: | This climate is a positive environment based on group interaction that encourages participation. The communication in the group suggests to members that they are “OK” even if there is disagreement with the points they have made. |

(Provide the S & D Climate Examples of Behaviors handout – McCorkle & Reese.

Handout and assign the Feedback reading - Keyton.)



## Feedback (Keyton)

1. Bookmark handout
  - Facilitate discussion of concepts on bookmark
2. Activity
  - group class into triads
  - A provides feedback to B while C observes
  - Rotate within each group – do 3 times
  - Ask for volunteers & have 1 or 2 dyads role play for class
3. Class discussion

(Handout: Feedback Bookmark)

(Today's Reading: Feedback – Chapter 13 – Keyton)

- 1.) Handout the Feedback Bookmark and use it as a template for a “mini-lecture.”

Side one is headed “FEEDBACK in Groups.”

Use examples and content from the lecture materials. This is the same info.

(The definition on the bookmark is the Nadler definition as it fit into the small space. Make sure to clarify that feedback is needed to address all types of behaviors that are enhancing or inhibiting the groups' process, which includes communicative behavior.)

- 2.) Activity    (transition ) Now we want to take some time to practice feedback.

- a. Place students into triads and have them label one person as A, one as B, and one as C.
- b. Have each student think of a group situation that would warrant feedback.

(Each group will need three issues to role play. You could hand out the first set while they think

and they would only need to come up with two.)

- A member is continually late for group meetings.
- A member displays superiority when talking to other members.
- A member does not feel included in the group – their inclusion needs are not being met.

- A person believes the group moves off the topic too much; the person wants more control.

- A person resents the childlike behavior that another member adopts when talking to her.

- A person resents that one member wants to play, rather than work.

- c. Have students role play with A providing feedback to B while C observes. Then have C share with

A and B what she/he saw.

d. Rotate within each group so that B is providing feedback to C and A is observing and then so that

C is providing feedback to A and B is observing. Each time have the observer provide feedback.

e. Ask for volunteers and have 1 or 2 dyads role play for class.

3.) Facilitate a class discussion of the exercise.

Ask what it felt like to be in each position.

Ask what the observers saw. Have several take the class through what occurred in the role play.

Ask questions that probe for examples of the content elements from the “mini-lecture.”

## **Communication Tools**

1. Personalized and Other Directed Language

2. Listening skills

- active listening
- reflecting
- reframing
- attentive nonverbal behavior
- perception checking

3. Skills building activities

- dyad work
- 1 partner in each dyad gets a role/scenario
- partner practices communication skills during role play
- give other partner a scenario and then role play so that other partner can practice skills

Could do the same with “I” statements and “you” statements

(Handout: Personalized and Other Directed Sentences, “I” statement package to include an “I” statement worksheet, Open Communication Rules)

(No Reading)

Socratic instruction – address the content from the lecture by asking questions and then working the content in as you connect their answers (there will be some element of a “mini-lecture” here)

**(Covering and practicing listening skills is the key** – this may require that you address personalized and other-directed language more generally. Think in terms of hitting the highlights of the lecture material.)

1.) Personalized versus Other Directed Statements

Have you heard anyone talk about “I” statements and “you” statements? What are some examples? (student ideas) This is one form of personalized (I) and other-directed (you) language.

Explain the key difference: Personalized language takes responsibility in the situation, which reduces defensiveness; while other directed language places blame and increases defensiveness.

Here are some other examples. (Distribute the handout on Personalized and Other-Directed Sentences.) If you have time pick out a few paired statements and talk about how group members might feel being the recipient of these statements.

Distribute the handout on “I” messages. Have them read through the first page (brief overview). Then explain the three part model for an “I” statement. If there is time have them take a few of the other directed examples they provided and work through the formula to turn them into “I” statements.

## 2.) Listening Skills

How do you know when someone is listening to you? What are the specific behaviors that make you feel that way? (student ideas)

(transition to a “mini-lecture” on the five skills – ask questions before making statements wherever you can)

- active listening: listening that displays an intent to understand the intended message

This is a general approach to listening that includes many of the other techniques we will talk about today. Often group members don’t listen attentively to one another. They may be distracted, thinking about other things, or thinking about what they are going to say next, (the latter is particularly true in conflict situations or disagreements). Active listening is a structured way of listening and responding that focuses attention on the speaker.

Many of the behaviors you mentioned earlier are called...

- attentive nonverbal behavior: attentive posture (turn toward the individual, lean forward, etc.), respectful eye communication, nodding head, saying “um” or “uh-huh,” using facial expressions that show interest or caring

What can you do to find out if you are understanding someone correctly?

- perception checking: asking whether we see the situation with the same understanding as others

Restate or paraphrase what was said and ask if that is what was meant.

- reflecting: acknowledging the emotion in a statement or situation

When you are feeling emotional in a conversation, how would it affect you to have someone acknowledge those feelings? (balance the answers – some may say it would be embarrassing and others may say it is a good thing because it shows they realize how important this is to me, etc.)

This is accomplished by listening to the feelings (stated or implied) of other group members and echoing the emotions – stating the perception you have. It is important to verbally or nonverbally ask the member to confirm, deny, or clarify the perception. You don't want to escalate the emotion in a conflict, but acknowledging other members' feelings can validate them as people and place the emotion on the table so that it can be addressed while managing the conflict.

- reframing: reconceptualizing a situation to achieve shared understanding

This is accomplished by restating what another member said with a slightly different perspective. You can accomplish the following by reframing effectively.

*increase clarity* by putting another member's comment into easy-to-understand language

*reduce the level of emotion* in the group by reframing with language that has less emotional content

*address bias* (whether it was intended or not) by reframing with language that will not be offensive to others

*point out commonalities among members* by reframing one member's statement/question in terms of another member's comments

*bring out/clarify interests rather than positions* by reframing a comment as the underlying need/desire you perceive the person has indicated rather than the position that was stated or you can check your understanding of a comment with a question but reframe the comment in your question to represent an interest rather than a position.

### 3.) Activities

- a. Place students into dyads
- b. Give 1 partner in each dyad a role/scenario
- c. Have the students role play the scenario such that one is focused on practicing listening communication skills (If it will be more effective you can have them work on a specific listening skill. You can walk around and ask if the person with the role play feels listened to and why. OR you can have all the dyads stop. Give the "speaker"

- opportunity to indicate to the partner if it feels as though they are listening and then have them continue the role play.)
- d. Give the other partner a scenario and then role play so that that individual is focused on practicing the skills
  - e. Then facilitate class discussion based on what was done in the dyads. Highlight examples of the result of effective listening behaviors. Dig for examples of the various functions of reframing.

You could do the same with “I” statements and “you” statements if time allows.

You can end by providing the Rules for Open Communication outline (5 rule model) handout and state the five rules as a summarizing conclusion to utilizing communication tools to address conflict in groups.

## **Appendix B**

### **Request Letter for GTA**

Ref: Thesis Research Project

October 9, 2006

Dear Fellow Graduate Students and Teaching Assistants:

This fall semester instruction for the conflict component of the 131X course has been revised to meet the needs of my graduate thesis, as well as the research of Dr. Cooper and Dr. Arundale. I realize that this requires extra time and effort on your part and wanted to express my appreciation for your cooperation in helping with this important study.

This research may provide a better understanding in several areas that will be shared with you through my final thesis. I would like to invite and encourage all of you to attend my thesis defense next April, to not only hear about my research, but have a better understanding of the process and work that is involved.

Again, thank you for your cooperation and time in helping me with my research. If there is anything I can do to assist in your future research, please do not hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,

Ronnie Welborn

## Appendix C

### Study Introduction Script for GTA

#### INTRODUCING THE STUDY, BEFORE YOU BEGIN INSTRUCTION ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT:

Please use an introduction (and procedure) as close to this as possible:

As on the syllabus for the course, we are starting today on a section on managing the conflicts that occur at times in almost every group that works together for an extended period of time.

Before we get started, the faculty of the Department of Communication would like to ask each of you for your help in conducting a study that will help us learn more about conflict management skills in groups.

I'm going to distribute a form to each of you that describes the study more completely, including what's involved on your part, and that asks for your participation in the study.

Please read the form carefully, then feel free to ask me any questions you have.

Participation in the study is voluntary, and if you decide you are willing to help us, please sign the second page, and then tear off the third page to keep for yourself.

After a few moments I will come around to collect the forms from each of you, individually.

If you are willing to help, and have signed the form, I will give you a brief questionnaire to complete right now.

If you do not want to take part, I will give you a brief reading to do while others are answering the questionnaire.

Now pass out the Informed Consent Form (only)

As soon as everyone has a form, say:

Please read the form carefully.

I'd be pleased to answer any questions you have.

Participation is voluntary, but if you are willing to help, please sign the second page, and tear off the third page to keep for yourself.

Proceed to pick up informed consent forms: If signed, give out questionnaire packet. If not signed, give out a copy of the reading.

After most people have completed the questionnaire, say:

Please be sure to put your blind ID number at the top of each page of the questionnaire, BUT NOT YOUR NAME.

I will collect the forms, and we'll get to work learning about conflict in groups.

***If you would like to know about the outcomes of the study, please give me your email address, or send it to one of the contact people on the Informed Consent Form.***

*The Department of Communication will then contact you in late March about the date for the presentation on the results of the study.*

THANK YOU!

CLIP ALL THE QUESTIONNAIRES TOGETHER FOR EACH SECTION, WRITE THE SECTION NUMBER ON THE FIRST SHEET, AND GIVE THEM TO BOB OR TO CHRISTIE: THANK YOU!

FINAL PHASE OF THE STUDY:  
AFTER ALL YOUR GROUPS HAVE FINISHED THEIR SYMPOSIUM  
PRESENTATIONS:

Please save about 15 minutes during a class after the symposium presentations, or before you begin your final exam for students to complete the third set of questionnaires.  
Please use a procedure as close as you can to the following:

When we began studying how to manage conflict in groups, a number of you volunteered to help in conducting a study about those skills.

It's important for the study to gather some final information from each person, so I'm going to pass out another set of questionnaires to everyone in the class.

If you volunteered to participate earlier, please spend a few minutes right now filling out these questionnaires. Again, your participation is voluntary, and you can choose not to complete these questionnaires, but your responses are VERY helpful and important to the study.

Please put your Blind ID number on each page, BUT NOT YOUR NAME!

If you did NOT volunteer earlier, please use these few minutes to read or to study, and just turn in the blank questionnaire when others turn in theirs.

THANK YOU!

AS PEOPLE START TO TURN IN THE QUESTIONNAIRES, REMIND THEM TO PUT THEIR BLIND ID ON EACH PAGE.

(IF YOU DO THIS AT THE END OF A CLASS PERIOD, PLEASE HOLD THE ENTIRE CLASS UNTIL MOST PEOPLE HAVE COMPLETED THE QUESTIONNAIRES, THEN COLLECT THEM ALL AT ONCE WHEN YOU LET THE CLASS GO. IF YOU LET SOME PEOPLE GO EARLY, IT CREATES A STRONG PRESSURE FOR OTHERS TO RUSH THROUGH, WHICH IS NOT GOOD).

Clip all the questionnaires together for each section, write the section number on the first sheet, and give them to Bob or to Christie; THANK YOU AGAIN !

COMPLETING THE STUDY: IMMEDIATELY AFTER YOU FINISH  
INSTRUCTION ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT:



Please save about 15 minutes at the end of the last class on conflict management for the completing the second questionnaires. Please use a procedure as close as you can to the following:

When we began this section of the class on managing conflict in groups, a number of you volunteered to help in conducting a study about these skills.

It's important for the study to gather a little more information from each person right at this point, so I'm going to pass out to everyone another set of questionnaires.

If you volunteered to participate earlier, please spend a few minutes right now filling out these questionnaires. Again, your participation is voluntary, and you can choose not to complete these questionnaires, but your responses are VERY helpful and important to the study.

Please put your Blind ID number on each page, BUT NOT YOUR NAME!

If you did NOT volunteer earlier, please use these few minutes to read or to study, and just turn in the blank questionnaire when others turn in theirs.

THANK YOU!

AS PEOPLE START TO TURN IN THE QUESTIONNAIRES, REMIND THEM TO PUT THEIR BLIND ID ON EACH PAGE.

(PLEASE HOLD THE ENTIRE CLASS UNTIL MOST PEOPLE HAVE COMPLETED THE QUESTIONNAIRES, THEN COLLECT THEM ALL AT ONCE WHEN YOU LET THE CLASS GO. IF YOU LET SOME PEOPLE GO EARLY, IT CREATES A STRONG PRESSURE FOR OTHERS TO RUSH THROUGH, WHICH IS NOT GOOD).

Clip all the questionnaires together for each section, write the section number on the first sheet, and give them to Bob or to Christie; THANK YOU!

## **Appendix D**

### **Informed Consent Form**

#### **Conflict Management in Groups**

**IRB# 06-70     Date Approved: October 6, 2006**

#### **Study Description**

You are being asked to take part in a research project exploring conflict management skills within groups. A part of the Communication 131X course is learning how to manage conflict within a group while working on a symposium. You are being asked to take part in this study because you are a student in Communication 131X. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before you agree to be in the study.

If you decide to take part, you will be asked to complete brief questionnaires before you begin studying conflict management, immediately after you study conflict management, and after your group's symposium presentation, requiring about 1 hour total of your time, during your regular Communication 131X class.

#### **Risks and Benefits**

There are no anticipated risks if you take part in this study. You may benefit by learning more about managing conflicts in groups. We do not guarantee that you will benefit from taking part in this study.

#### **Confidentiality**

All individual responses to questionnaires will be kept strictly confidential. You will be asked to write your blind I.D. number on each questionnaire you complete. Your Instructor is the only person who knows which blind I.D. number belongs to which person. The researchers conducting this study will not know which blind I.D. number is assigned to you or to anyone else.

#### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your decision to take part in the study is voluntary. You are free to choose not to take part in the study or to stop taking part at any time without any penalty to you.

#### **Contacts and Questions**

Your responses are important for this study, but if you have concerns about any of the questions, you may leave them blank. If you have questions, please feel free to ask us. If

you have questions later you may contact either Ronnie Welborn, 303-499-1735, [fsrdw1@uaf.edu](mailto:fsrdw1@uaf.edu), or Dr. Robert Arundale, 907-474-6799, [ffrba@uaf.edu](mailto:ffrba@uaf.edu).

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Research Coordinator in the Office of Research Integrity at 474-7800 (Fairbanks area) or 1-866-876-7800 (outside the Fairbanks area).

**Statement of Consent:**

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been provided a copy of this form.

---

Signature of Subject & Date

---

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent & Date

## Appendix E

### Conflict Communication Self-efficacy Measure

Blind I.D. # \_\_\_\_\_

The statements below represent feelings that individuals might have about their ability to deal with others effectively in group conflict situations. Conflict may involve both conflict of ideas and interpersonal conflict. Think of your work in groups in Communication 131X and select an answer that indicates the degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement in general. The scale is from one (1) to seven (7), one meaning you completely disagree, and seven meaning you completely agree. Please write the number of your answer on the line provided.

Completely Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely Agree
------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---------------------

1. I can deal with others effectively in group conflict situations. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I am sensitive to others needs in group conflict situations. \_\_\_\_\_
3. During group conflict situations I listen carefully to others and obtain as much information as I can. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I have a good command of the language. \_\_\_\_\_
5. I generally say the right thing at the right time. \_\_\_\_\_
6. I express my ideas clearly in group conflict situations. \_\_\_\_\_
7. I am easy to talk to. \_\_\_\_\_
8. I feel confident during group conflict situations, I am sure of what to say and do. \_\_\_\_\_

Note. Adapted from Cooper, C. (2002). Communicating your participation at work: An exploration of participation types, communication behaviors, organizational commitment, and satisfaction. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2002).

## Appendix F

### Frequency of Conflict Measure and Conflict Management Measure

Blind I.D. # \_\_\_\_\_

The questions below assess how frequently individuals have experienced conflict in groups. When answering the following questions think about your experiences within your groups in Communication 131X and select an answer that indicates the frequency of conflict you experienced. The scale is from one (1) to seven (7), one meaning very often, and seven meaning never. Please write the number of your answer on the line provided.

Very Often	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Never
---------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

1. How often did you experience conflict of any type in your group? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How often did you experience conflict of ideas? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How often did you experience inter-personal conflict? \_\_\_\_\_

This set of questions assesses how well you perceive your group managed inter-personal conflict and conflict of ideas. The scale is from one (1) to seven (7), one meaning excellent, and seven meaning poor.

Excellent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Poor
-----------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	------

1. How well did your group manage inter-personal conflict? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How well did your group manage conflict of ideas? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How well did your group encourage discussion from all members? \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G

### Communication Self-efficacy Measure

Statements in this section represent possible feelings that individuals might have about their ability to deal with others effectively through spoken communication. Think of your organization and pick the answer that indicates the degree of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

Completely Disagree    1-----7    Completely Agree

1. I can deal with others effectively.
2. I am sensitive to others needs in conversations.
3. During conversations I listen carefully to others and obtain as much information as I can.
4. I have a good command of the language.
5. I generally say the right thing at the right time.
6. I express my ideas clearly in conversations.
7. I am easy to talk to.
8. I feel confident during my conversations, I am sure of what to say and do.

Note. Adapted from Monge, P.R., Backman, S. G., Dillard, J. P., and Eisenberg, E. M. (1982). Communicator competence in the workplace: Model testing and scale development. *Communication Yearbook*, 5, 505-528, and Cegala, D. J. (1981) Interaction involvement: A cognitive dimension of communicative competence, *Communication Education*, 30,109-121.”

## Appendix H

### Generalized Self-efficacy Measure

Statements in this section represent possible feelings that individuals might have about their general ability to perform effectively, that is their general expectations about success. Think of yourself at work and pick the answer that indicates the degree of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

Completely Disagree    1-----7    Completely Agree

1. I give up on things before completing them.
2. I avoid facing difficulties.
3. If something looks too complicated, I will not even bother to try it.
4. When trying to learn something new, I soon give up if I am not initially successful.
5. I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult for me.
6. I feel insecure about my ability to do things.
7. I give up easily.

*Note:* From Sherer, M. et al (1982). The self-efficacy scale: Construction and validation. *Psychological Reports*, 51, 663-671.

## Appendix I

### Communication 131X General Syllabus

Syllabus: Communication 131X  
 Fundamentals of Oral Communication -Group Context  
 University of Alaska Fairbanks  
 Fall 2006

Instructor:  
 Email:  
 Work Phone: 474-1876

Office Hours:  
 Office Location: 503H Gruening Building

**Required Texts:** 1) Sprague, J. & Stuart, D. (2005). *The Speaker's Handbook*, 7<sup>th</sup> Ed. Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth. (With: Sherwood, K., *Speech Builder Express*).  
 2) Young, K.S., Wood, J.T., Phillips, G.M., & Pedersen, D.J. (2001). *Group Discussion*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland.  
 3) *COMM 131X. Supplementary Information Packet*, Edition 16

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### Course Description

This course is an introduction to the study of small group communication and public presentation. It is designed to help you learn to apply theory regarding small group communication to actual participation on small group contexts. You will become more competent and comfortable in communicating in group situations through in-class participation, problem solving, group observation, and public presentation activities.

**IMPORTANT:** This course places an emphasis on group interaction and productivity. Forty percent (40%) of the semester grade for each student is earned through his/her group's grade, as in participation in group meetings, class group activities, and one group symposium presentation.

**NOTE:** COMM 131X requires group meetings outside of class time.

Last day to drop course (course will not appear on academic record): September 16  
 Last day to withdraw (course will appear on academic record as "W") October 28

**Words of advice:** This course requires extensive reading, class participation, and group work outside of class. If your schedule does not permit you to dedicate time and effort to the course, then please drop this course now. Other students in your group are counting



on you to be productive. If you are not, this is a good way to make enemies. In the course, students need to be thinking about their group, as well as themselves.

### **Statement of Policies for this Class**

#### **Student Responsibilities:**

A: ATTENDANCE. All students are expected to attend every class and the final exam. Attendance is a graded element of this course. You are also responsible for in-class activities (which cannot be made up). There are some circumstances for which absence is unavoidable, such as illness or family emergency. I must be notified of an absence before or on the day it occurs either through a phone message or via e-mail, and receive documentation of the reason as soon as possible thereafter. A student with an unexcused absence on the day of their presentation will receive a **zero** for that presentation. There will be no accommodation for students who are absent on the day of the scheduled final exam.

B: PARTICIPATION: This is a skills development course, requiring student participation. A significant part of your learning will come from observation of class presentations. Participation in discussions and activities is also required. Each student will become an active member of a group and be required to attend out of class group meetings arranged in advance by their group.

C: TIME. Making effective public presentations and being an effective group member are skills that each student will be developing throughout the semester. Like any skills, learning to deliver an effective presentation and working well in groups take time to achieve. Each student must be prepared to spend that time in class and outside of class.

D: ETHICAL STANDARDS. All interaction in the classroom is to be consistent with the Credo for Ethical Communication of the National Communication Association, which has been adopted by the Department of Communication, and can be found in Appendix IV in the Student Information Packet. In addition, behavior consistent with the American Psychological Association standards for ethical behavior with regard to using respectful language when interacting with others is expected from each student and the instructor. These guidelines are included in the Student Information Packet, Appendix VI.

E: STUDENT INFORMATION PACKET. YOU are responsible for knowing the information on the course and on assignments that is included in the Student Information Packet, as well for the information in this syllabus.

F. STUDENT SUPPORT: Students with special needs or concerns need to contact Student Support Services (474-6844) for documentation to present to Instructor. The Office of Disability Services (474-7043) provides accommodations to students with disabilities.

**Tuesday/Thursday Course Schedule (Subject to revision)**

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT DUE</u>
8/31	Introduction to class	
9/5	Class introductions & Begin Diagnostic Presentations (SIP p. 11)	Syllabus, SIP pp. 1-11
9/7	Diagnostic presentations	<b><i>Class schedule to instructor</i></b>
9/12	Effective public presentations	<i>Handbook</i> , Chs. 1,5,9,24,10,11
9/14	Effective public presentations	<i>Handbook</i> , Chs. 12,13,14,15,21
9/19	Effective public presentations	<i>Handbook</i> , Chs. 3,4,25,26,27 & pages 20-23, 28-29.
9/21	1 <sup>st</sup> GRADED PRESENTATION (SIP p. 12)	Outline Due (Speech Builder)
9/26	1 <sup>st</sup> GRADED PRESENTATION	Outline Due (Speech Builder)
9/28	Intro. to Human Communication & Groups	<i>Handbook</i> , pp. 7-9
10/3	Effective public presentations (review)	<i>Handbook</i> , Chs. 6,7,8,28
10/5	TEST #1	All assigned material
10/10	Groups as systems	<i>Discussion</i> , Chs. 2, 3
10/12	Group development & climate	Topics & Resources Due & <i>Discussion</i> , Chs. 4, 5
10/17	2 <sup>nd</sup> GRADED PRESENTATION (SIP p. 16)	Outline Due (Speech Builder)
10/19	2 <sup>nd</sup> GRADED PRESENTATION	Outline Due (Speech Builder)
10/24	Diversity & Communication	Reading as assigned
10/25	Handling conflict in groups	<b><i>Contracts Due</i></b> (SIP, pp. 13-15) & <i>Discussion</i> , Ch. 6
10/31	Effective group problem solving	<i>Discussion</i> , Chs. 1, 7
11/2	Effective group problem solving	<i>Discussion</i> , Chs. 8, 9
11/7	Effective group problem solving	<i>Discussion</i> , Chs. 10, 11
11/9	GRADED PROBLEM SOLVING (SIP pp. 17-21)	
11/14	GRADED PROBLEM SOLVING	
11/16	Group work day	Work as group assigns & <i>Handbook</i> , Ch. 30
11/21	Group work day	Work as group assigns
11/23	Holiday	
11/28	Group work day	Symposium Outlines Due
11/30	SYMPOSIUM PRESENTATIONS (SIP pp. 22, 23)	
12/5	SYMPOSIUM PRESENTATIONS	
12/7	Review for test	<b><i>Assessment of Group</i></b> (SIP, p. 24-25)
12/13-16	(Final Exam Date & Time) TEST #2	All assigned material

### Mon/Wed/Fri Course Schedule (Subject to revision)

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT DUE</u>
9/1	Introduction to class	
9/6	Class introductions	Syllabus; SIP pp. 1-11
9/8	Diagnostic presentations (SIP p. 11)	<b><i>Class Schedule to Instructor</i></b>
9/11	Diagnostic presentations	
9/13	Effective public presentations	<i>Handbook</i> , Chs. 1, 5, 9, 24
9/15	Effective public presentations	<i>Handbook</i> , Chs. 10, 11, 12
9/18	Effective public presentations	<i>Handbook</i> , Chs. 13, 14, 15, 21
9/20	Effective public presentations	<i>Handbook</i> , Chs. 4, 25, 26, 27
9/22	Effective public presentations	<i>Handbook</i> , Ch. 3, pp. 20-23, 28-29
9/25	1 <sup>st</sup> GRADED PRESENTATION (SIP p. 12)	Outline Due (Speech Builder)
9/27	1 <sup>st</sup> GRADED PRESENTATION	Outline Due (Speech Builder)
9/29	1 <sup>st</sup> GRADED PRESENTATION	Outline Due (Speech Builder)
10/2	Intro. to Human Communication & Groups	<i>Handbook</i> , pp. 7-9
10/3	Effective public presentations (review)	<i>Handbook</i> , Chs. 6, 7, 8
10/6	Effective public presentations (review)	<i>Handbook</i> , Ch. 28
10/9	TEST #1	All assigned material
10/11	Groups as systems	<i>Discussion</i> , Ch. 2, 3
10/13	Group development	<i>Discussion</i> , Ch. 4, 5
10/16	Group development	Topics & Resources Due
10/18	Group climate	Reading as assigned
10/20	2 <sup>nd</sup> GRADED PRESENTATION (SIP p. 16)	Outline Due (Speech Builder)
10/23	2 <sup>nd</sup> GRADED PRESENTATION	Outline Due (Speech Builder)
10/25	2 <sup>nd</sup> GRADED PRESENTATION	Outline Due (Speech Builder)
10/27	Diversity & Communication	Reading as assigned
10/30	Diversity & Communication	Reading as assigned
11/1	Handling conflict in groups	<i>Discussion</i> , Ch. 6
11/3	Handling conflict in groups	<b><i>Contracts Due</i></b> (SIP pp. 13-15)
11/6	Effective group problem solving	<i>Discussion</i> , Chs. 1, 7
11/8	Effective group problem solving	<i>Discussion</i> , Chs. 8, 9
11/10	Effective group problem solving	<i>Discussion</i> , Chs. 10, 11
11/13	Effective group problem solving	Reading as assigned
11/15	GRADED PROBLEM SOLVING (SIP pp. 17-21)	
11/17	GRADED PROBLEM SOLVING	
11/20	Group work day	Work as group assigns & <i>Handbook</i> , Ch. 30
11/22	Group work day	Work as group assigns
11/24	Holiday	
11/27	Group work day	Work as group assigns

11/29	Group work day	Symposium Outlines Due
12/1	SYMPOSIUM PRESENTATIONS (SIP pp. 22, 23)	
12/4	SYMPOSIUM PRESENTATIONS	
12/6	SYMPOSIUM PRESENTATIONS	
12/8	SYMPOISUM PRESENTATIONS	
12/11	Review for test	<i>Assessment of Group</i> (SIP, p. 24-25)
12/13-16 (Final Exam Date & Time)	TEST #2	All assigned material